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COUNTRY HOUSES.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE day after the arrival of the foreigners, Comtesse Rosenberg's maid was so ill, from the effects of her journey and voyage, it was necessary to send for Mr. Watkins, the apothecary of Minehead; he promptly obeyed the summons, and after seeing his patient, went to Mrs. Bartlet's room, and to her medicine closet to mix up the requisite remedies.

"What," said the good lady, "do you think of Mademoiselle Josepine?"

"Oh," replied the man of medicine, "she will do very well with a little of your good nursing, the *gastric* powers are a little disturbed; but how does the great lady do? I have seen the second person in the establishment, and an odd looking person she is!"

"Oh, what the Chanoinesse! ay those papists are

queer folks ; and to own the truth, Mr. Watkins, to you as a friend, I think there will be no luck in the house while they remain here ; as to the Comtesse, as far as I can hear, for I have never seen her, she is a genteel creature, and easy to please, only wanting a little sugar and water, and her coffee, but that priest and the Chanoinesses, catholics as they are, love good living, and only this blessed day, which being Friday they call a *meger* day, they must have for their dinner, for you must know they do not dine with my Lord, what must they have, but a carp stewed with Madeira, and an omulet, two of the richest dishes I can make ; I am sure we shall have enough of them and their fasts."

" But who," said the apothecary, as he was working the pestle and mortar, " is the lady ? "

" Oh, quite a grand person, a ward of my lord's, he treats her like a princess, but he does not see much of her, she likes to live retired, and my lord has taken George, you know George Happing, to be her own footman, and has changed his livery, and given him one all over lace and tags ; so by that she is no relation of his Lordship's, or he would not have given him another livery" .

Mr. Watkins understood this remark, and replied, " Very true, Mrs. Bartlett ; now I think this draught will do, and the pills to be taken at bed time, and this

every four hours: you will see it properly administered."

"Most assuredly, sir, but would you not like to take something? a little egg wine, and a morsel of seed cake?"

"I thank you, madam, your seed cake is always so good, and I am likely to have so long a ride, I will not refuse your kindness."

"If Mr. Watkins had made a double charge for his visits that day, they would have been well worth it: for he carried at least half a crown's worth of news."

Mrs. Dalby had hardly received his instructions how to manage her baby, who had a slight fever, than she said, "What news, Mr. Watkins?"

"Why, really, ma'am, not much, except the arrival of the foreigners at the Castle. I have been called to attend one of the ladies, or rather the lady's woman, who had suffered from her voyage."

"Do tell me," cried the impatient lady, "who is it that all this preparation has been made for?"

"Why, ma'am, they call her the Comtesse Rosenberg: a very young, and, as I hear, a very beautiful, lady; a ward of Lord Dunster's, and a great heiress."

"But where does she come from?"

“Germany, madam; ‘but more this deponent saith not:’ but time will show what, and who, she is, as the good and sensible housekeeper, Mrs. Bartlet, says.”

With a little variation, the same history was repeated wherever Mr. Watkins went, whilst Lord Dunster fancied he lived in such perfect retirement, that none knew, or cared, what he did, or who he received: his new guests were the conversation of the neighbours, far and near.

By the time Mr. Watkins reached his own door he was thoroughly wet, it having rained some hours; as he was getting off his horse, his neighbour, Mr. Simpson, at that time Mayor of Minehead, passed under the shelter of his umbrella.

“Well, neighbour, you go out all weathers, rain, hail, or shine, is the same to you;” said the facetious magistrate.

“Yes,” replied Watkins, “I have been a longer round than usual to-day, for I was called to the Castle first.”

“Who is ill there?” said the mayor.

“Oh! only a French *fille de chambre*, I think they call her, belonging to the Comtesse Rosenberg.”

“What, are all those expected folks arrived?” asked his worship, “and what are they like, for I have had trouble enough to please them?”

"Oh! I am too wet to tell you now, and I dare say Mrs. Simpson is waiting dinner, so we will have our gossip at the club, if I can get there to-night," and he turned to his house, and his neighbour entered his own linen-draper's shop, on the other side of the street.

After changing his shoes and calling for dinner, he joined his lady, now in her own estimation, as well as that of the borough, a great personage.

"Well, Mr. Mayor," said she, as he put his knife into a leg of mutton, "what is the best news you bring?"

"Oh, I have a great piece of news to tell you, but I must first have a mouthful or two of this mutton, I can't talk on an empty stomach."

"You are rather tiresome, my dear."

But after a pause long enough for her lord and master to swallow a large slice of mutton, and a proportionable quantity of sallad, she said, "Well, now for your news."

"Well, then, Watkins has been to the castle, and seen the newly-arrived strangers, for whom there has been so much preparation!"

"Has he, indeed! and what are they like?"

"That I did not enquire, you must ask him yourself next time you see him."

"That's quite lucky," said the lady, "for you must know, Mr. Mayor, I am going to have a party, a few friends, and a little supper to-night; I suppose you will go first to your club, but you can ask who you like from it; I shall have Mrs. Gosset, her good man of course will come with you; Mrs. Droxley, and a few others; I hope you have no objection, my dear, but I thought it right, in your situation, to be a little hospitable, and keep up the dignity of the mayoralty."

"Oh, by all means, only let me have a roast fowl and some punch, that's all I care for."

"That you may depend on, I have taken care of *your* comforts; I think I must ask Watkins, and he will tell us all about it."

"Pray do, if you like it."

So a message was dispatched across the street, and a favourable answer returned.

At the proper hour the party assembled, and were marshalled and seated according to their respective ranks; they were all ladies, as there was a club at the George every evening to read the papers, as soon as the mail arrived.

Of the female assemblage, some were wives of those who had passed the civic chair, and some of those who were anticipating that honour; Mrs. Simpson occupied the middle station, being the mayoress reg-

nant, or as she called herself *consort*, she took the middle place, though she felt shewas in *supreme power* for the time being.

At the upper end of the room sat Mrs. Gosset, a large lady in blue satin, with a flaming turban of scarlet and gold stripes; next her was slender Mrs. Droxley, in yellow lustring, and a hat and feathers; and below her a tall straight Miss Dodson, *her father had the good fortune to fill the mayoralty at the time of the coronation of our late most gracious sovereign, and little dreaming of the honour awaiting him, when he carried up the loyal and dutiful address of the Borough of Minehead, honest Robert Dodson returned Sir Robert, with all his “blushing honour fresh upon him.”* Unluckily his wife died the year before, and he had not the gratification of making “Joan a Lady,” but his daughter would have been delighted to have had the title, and thought it very hard, as she represented her late mother in every other point, she could not be Lady Martha Dodson; had she fortunately known that his Majesty is sometimes graciously pleased to allow the sisters of earls to take the same rank as the daughters, no doubt she would have petitioned the crown on the subject; but as it was, she could only give herself ladyship airs in her native town of Minehead; and as these were often disputed, she was continually a little *brûlé* with her neighbours.

Independent of the borough and its honours, past, present, or anticipated, was Mrs. Wellman, a maiden lady, who, sinking her christian name, passed for belonging to the widowhood ; she was of small independent fortune, liked easy attained society, and a game at cards ; but she was unfortunately deaf.

There were other persons who we shall not tire our readers by enumerating. The conversation turned on the weather, and the health or sickness of their respective families.

The lady of the house seemed rather restless, it might be called fidgetty, and, whilst making tea, started at a small knock at the door, saying, “ surely that can’t be Mr. Watkins already ? ”

“ Do you expect him, ma’am ? ” said several of the ladies at once, and when answered in the affirmative, Mrs. Droxley said,

“ Oh ! I am so very glad I shall see him, really he is so occupied I have sent to his shop three times to-day, as I wanted him to see little Charley ; but he is never to be found, and the dear child is not well, and he is so very precious, I can never be easy if Watkins does not see him two or three times a week.”

“ Well,” exclaimed Mrs. Gosset, who did not look as if she had much anxiety, “ that is good ! if you had half a dozen you would not want the apothecary unless they were ill, or his bill for looking at them.”

"Very likely, ma'am," replied Mrs. Droxley, "but when you consider of how much consequence it is to Mr. Droxley, to have a son his successor in his fine business, I cannot be too careful of the dear child, and as Mr. Droxley can happily afford to pay any little bill I may choose to have, I never think of that; though I don't wish to have a large family to provide for, I assure you, well as we could do it."

Mrs. Gosset, who was blessed with six rosy, healthy children, felt sufficiently her own happy lot to make any reply to this, but said, "I am very glad Mr. Watkins is coming here to-night, for I want to ask him, for he goes into all the *fine* houses in the neighbourhood, about muslin curtains for our cottage; I dare say he has seen those lately put up at the castle."

"You might have known all about that below stairs," said Mrs. Simpson, "for we not only served the muslin, and chintz too; but the mayor was obliged to send Thompson twice to town about them, before my lord was satisfied."

"It is not the materials I want to know about, because we can have our's to our own fancy, but I want to know how the draperies hang."

"I should think," returned the chief magistrate's wife, "that Watkins can't tell you much about them, he is so engrossed by calomel and magnesia."

"You will find a country house a great expense, ma'am," said Mrs. Droxley, addressing her neighbour in blue satin, "I am sure we do, who have only one child, though indeed we have more servants, and Mr. Droxley likes to be comfortable in town and country."

"Oh!" replied Mrs. Gosset, "we are not going to make any great shew, only to get a little fresh air, quite in the cottage style, nothing of the villa, not that we could not afford that."

"I am very glad always to hear of prudence," said the yellow lustring lady, "especially where there is a large and increasing family," which she greatly envied, having only one sickly pampered boy, to shew against her neighbour's group of healthy boys and girls.

Who does not know an apothecary's knock? all agreed the one just heard must be Mr. Watkins. The lady of the house received him with *agitated* pleasure, and giving him a little wink that he was to take his cue from her, she said, "we have been impatiently expecting you, Mr. Watkins, and we hope you have a great deal of news to tell us."

"You do me and my news great honour, ladies; though I don't know to which you mean to give it."

"Before we have any news," said Mrs. Droxley "you must know my anxiety about dear Charley, I have sent three times to your house after you, he was

quite feverish when I left him, indeed I could hardly persuade myself to come out, only nurse is so careful and so experienced, I assure you he would not eat his supper."

"I suppose, ma'am, he had eaten too much dinner, give him a dose of rhubarb, and he will do very well."

"Indeed I don't think, Mr. Watkins, that can be the case, though, to be sure, he had a plumb pudding, which he is very fond of."

"Oh! the very thing ma'am, depend upon it, that has lain heavy on his stomach, half the children die of over-feeding; a great London practitioner says, over-feeding in children is five thousand a year to him, though half of them die from it."

"But, Mr. Watkins," said the impatient Mrs. Gosset, "do tell me what sort of muslin curtains you see most of in great houses, I know you go every where."

"Why ma'am, I am, I own it most gratefully, employed by the most distinguished people in the neighbourhood; but I don't particularly notice those things, I think these curtains of the mayor's lady are much like other people's."

This was a discomfiture to the questioner, and a great triumph to the magistrate's wife, who able, no longer to refrain, exclaimed,

"Never mind the muslin curtains, Mr. Watkins, you can tell us, the mayor says, all about those foreign ladies that have been so long expected at the castle."

"Are they arrived?" exclaimed all the company at once, "and what are they like?"

"Really, ladies, you don't give me time, I can't answer two or three questions at once, those I have seen were, a very sick waiting gentlewoman, and a Chanoinesse."

"What!" said the deaf lady, "a *lioness*, has my lord got a *lioness*, I always thought he was a very odd man."

The violent laugh this produced, told Mrs. Wellman she was in an error, and she very angrily said, "I don't think it very genteel and well-bred to laugh at any person's infirmities; you, ladies, many of you may be so afflicted, and younger than I have been."

Of course, when the laugh was over, several ladies at once asked, "What is a Chanoinesse?"

"Why, ladies" replied Mr. Watkins, "I believe it is a sort of nun."

"Oh dear! a nun, how I should like to see a real nun," exclaimed Miss Dodson, "but I thought nuns never were allowed to come out of their convent; are you sure, Mr. Watkins, that she is not a Canon's wife, for I remember when I went with Sir Robert to Wind-

sor, to see the residence of our beloved sovereign, who had been so gracious to papa, we saw the chapel of St. George and the Dragon, and there were separate places for the Canons, and some below for their wives, we thought it quite like *popery*, to separate husband and wife."

"I don't know," returned Mr. Watkins, "anything about the Canons belonging to St. George and the Dragon, but I am very sure the lady in question is no wife, nor ever will be."

"Dear me! Mr. Watkins," said Miss Dodson, "are you going to set up for a cunning man; and can you tell whether a person will, or will not, be married."

"For this lady, I can answer," said the apothecary, "and without any pretensions to being a cunning man; though I only saw her for a moment!"

"Well!" exclaimed Mis. Gosset, "there must be something curious about her, that could make you form this opinion; is she crooked? what is she like?"

"Very much like Mrs. Hoskins, the green-grocer, in appearance, madam; only she has a very pleasant, sensible countenance." What can you mean, Mr. Watkins, for Mrs. Hoskins had two, if not three, husbands!"

• "Very likely, madam, and her likeness will never have *one*."

"Positively," said Mrs. Simpson, "we must know why?"

"Then, madam, she has the foot of a camel."

"Dear, what an odd deformity, what is it like?"

"The foot of a man who treads clay, only with a shoe on, the shape of her foot,"

"What is her hand like, did you see that?"

"Rather handsome."

"And how is she dressed?" asked one of the ladies.

"Something like Mrs. Hoskins, only she wears a golden cross tied by a ribbon, round her neck, and has a Saint Agatha, or some such pious lady, worked on the sleeve of her gown."

"But did you not see the great lady?"

"No, madam!"

"But who do you suppose she is?"

"Just what she is said to be, a ward of Lord Dunster's."

The arrival of sundry members of the club, called for whist, and loo; supper and punch finished the evening.

Little farther fuel was afforded to feed the flame of gossiping amongst the wealthy inhabitants of Minehead by the transactions of the castle. The addition of four or five persons makes no change in the routine of a large establishment.

The courier who conducted the foreigners, departed the morning after his arrival ; he had a short conference previously with Lord Dunster ; but as he professed to understand only German and French, no information could be elicited from him by the *domestics*.

- The young Comtesse had been used to seclusion ; she lived chiefly in her own apartment ; she was rich in resources ; and the Chanoinesse, who was something between a *bonne*, a governess, and a *chaprone*, was always cheerful, and soon made herself a favourite throughout the house. Not so the priest, Mr. Meynel,
- as Lord Dunster called him, though he was generally designated "*the father*" in the family, a *soi-disant* title. His position was rather equivocal ; by Lord Dunster he was treated haughtily, and quite as an inferior and dependent, and yet there was a sort of indefinable insolence in his manner towards his apparent patron, that said, "Offend me if you dare !"

Lady Gertrude always avoided him, she could not endure his peremptory and supercilious manner. The housekeeper disliked him for his fastidiousness on the subject of cookery, and the housemaids detested him for the dirtiness of his apartment; over and above all, good Mrs. Bartlet was *sure*, and repeated the certainty on every occasion, "that there would be no luck in the house whilst those papists staid."

A small retired room had been given up to Mr. Meynel's use, near his own apartment, and accessible from Comtesse Rosenberg's, without going through the body of the house ; and there, it was believed, mass was regularly performed ; though all the paraphernalia of it was carefully concealed in a closet. But when the rest of the family attended the parish church, it was conjectured that the Catholics performed their own rites : and on great occasions they went publicly to a Catholic chapel some miles off.

It was remarked in the house, that Lord Dunster's spirits were improved; Lady Constantia, as she was usually called by him, was very musical, and sometimes had her harp, or guitar, brought down of an evening, and Lord Dunster's valet always observed that his Lord went to bed more cheerful, and passed a better night after her sweet music ; and her manners were not less captivating and delightful, and engaged the esteem of the household—she gave little trouble ; her *femme de chambre* was whimsical and tiresome, but she was rather a subject of amusement than annoyance.

Lady Gertrude was so happy with her young companion, who took a lively interest in all her benevolent deeds and institutions, that she lengthened her stay at Dunster much longer than usual, and it was not till the

end of October, that even the bleak situation of the castle, prevailed on her to quit it for her own warm and sheltered cottage on the Devonshire coast. And when she was gone, the Chanoinesse always accompanied her charge when she joined Lord Dunster of an evening.

The following spring, Lord Dunster moved his family to his house in St. James' square, and was joined by Lady Gertrude Mahon.

It has been often said that it takes three years to establish a London acquaintance, by those who have long been out of society, be their rank what it may.

It was heavy, up-hill work to Lady Gertrude ; she knew only a few quiet people, mostly family connexions, no party givers ; and Lord Dunster, from ill health, lived nearly as secluded in town, as country ; and this particular year, from a death in the Royal family, there was no drawing-room.

A foreigner now excites little curiosity, unless she has a great fortune to attract the avarice of young men, or beauty, to rouse the envy and jealousy of the Lady mothers, who, indeed, dread *novelty*, equally with *wealth and beauty*.

Lady Gertrude and her protégée went out but little compared with the usual estimate of ball going young ladies. A subscription at Almack's, and an occasional

great general party, and a box at the Opera, were the only places where the interesting Comtesse was seen, and, before she became sufficiently known, to become “the fashion,” an evil that must have happened to her, when her *rank*, *talents*, and *fortune* should be fully known, unexpected events called her suddenly to the Continent. To her, those who knew her, might apply Cowper’s beautiful lines :—

“ She came, she is gone, we have met,
And meet, perhaps, never again ;
The sun of that moment is set,
And seems to *have risen in vain.*”

All that could be discovered respecting her, was that her departure was soon followed by that of Lord Dunster, who broke up his establishment, and was gone abroad, attended by a physician.

Lady Gertrude departed to ruralize in Devonshire. In the London world there is such a succession of events, which everybody talk of, and nobody cares about, that the last that occurs drives its predecessor into oblivion. If the interesting Comtesse of Rosenberg was missed and regretted at Almack’s, or the Opera, it was by *one individual*, who was *too sensible* of her attractions for his own peace.

CHAPTER XIX.

WE must now return to our friends at Inglewood ; Lady Honiton had been chiefly occupied since we left her, with watching most anxiously her son's health, and following all the various and opposing symptoms of his treacherous and flattering disease ; she was just at this moment cheered by delusive appearances ; though Lord Ottery had not *really* improved, he had for several days *seemed* better, and more cheerful.

One morning, contrary to Lord Honiton's usual habit, he breakfasted in his own room, and sent to his assembled family their respective letters, and the papers. Lady Louisa took up one of the latter, and the next moment dropped, apparently lifeless, from her chair. All the party were assiduous in their attentions to her, but it was long before she was restored to

consciousness. Lady Honiton was lavishing her blame of Dixon for having said, “ Nothing ailed Lady Louisa ;” but, alas ! mental maladies are the most difficult to discover, and when discovered, the most out of medical skill, for

“ Who can minister to a mind diseased.”

After Lady Louisa had been carried to her own room, Miss O’Brian examined the *Morning Herald* she had let fall, and discovered the following paragraph :

“ It is with deep regret that we announce that our letters from Malta state that a dangerous and destructive fever rages there, and with still greater pain we add, that a gallant, and highly respected officer, Colonel Neville, it is feared, will fall a sacrifice to it ; he was alive, but that was all, when the last dispatch came away.”

Soon after this scene, Lord Honiton enquired for his daughter, and when told how she had been affected, severely reproached himself ; but the truth was, that the first letter he opened was one on important law business, which required an immediate answer ; and he was so absorbed in its consideration, he opened no other ; but now he had one in his hand from General Clayton, confirming in some respects the report from Malta, but adding that a letter from Colonel Neville’s

physician did not prohibit all hopes ; indeed it assured the General, if his nephew survived the next twenty-four hours, he would be out of danger, as the crisis would be over ; but the mischief to the mind of the unfortunate Lady Louisa was done, she was hardly in a state to take comfort from his account ; but after many hours of mental suffering, a composing draught from Dixon soothed both body and mind.

The following day a considerable degree of fever remained, but no danger was apprehended ; indeed, mental diseases are seldom dangerous but in overwrought minds, and Lady Louisa's was not of that description. She felt, and she felt acutely, but she indulged in no violent paroxysms ; her grief was calm, more nearly allied to despair than to irritation.

Lady Honiton's maternal affection was anxiously awakened by this indisposition of her daughter, yet she could not help saying to Miss O'Brian, "I knew no good could ever come of that attachment, have not I always said so to you, my kind friend ? How my lord could enter into it is beyond my comprehension."

"But," said Miss O'Brian, "don't you think it had imperceptibly grown up with Lady Louisa, it was formed before she was herself aware of it."

"But then," said Lady Honiton, "my lord should have put a stop to it the moment it was mentioned to him."

"Would that have remedied the evil, if such it is?" said her companion, "Lady Louisa would have been as broken-hearted if the thing had been forbid as she is now."

"My dear Juliet," replied Lady Honiton, "you are as romantic as your namesake, I think! but don't broach these opinions before Clara, I beg."

"And, my dear Lady Honiton, what will it signify if I do. What influence have *I*, tell me, have *you* been able in any way to control Lady Adelaide? can you make her marry any man you may pick out for her? or can you prevent her marrying that Sir Godfrey Blisset, if she chooses to do it?"

Lady Honiton's sigh at this remark was almost a groan, "Alas!" she replied, "do not mention all the horrors connected with that vile plebeian name, I really begin to think marriage goes by destiny!"

"And by a destiny we cannot control," replied Miss O'Brian.

"Well, well! my dear," said Lady Honiton, "I will try what I can do to control *your* destiny, and that will be some comfort."

Some days passed without even a chance of farther news from Malta, and poor Lady Lousia continued in a state of great mental anguish.

One morning, as Lord Honiton was taking his ac-

customed ride, directing it towards the lodge nearest the high road, a person, shably dressed, passed him, who he at first supposed to be one of the village tradesmen, but it was neither a face he knew, nor was the salutation the person gave him, of that kind usually received from *rustics*, the bow had something of the gentleman in it, and Lord Honiton was struck also with something remarkable in the bald head of the stranger when his hat was off; it reminded him of the *tonsure* of the Catholic clergy. After walking his horse a few steps, Lord Honiton turned round, and overtook the stranger, and asked him if his business was carrying him to Inglewood house? he answered in the affirmative.

"And may I, as master of Inglewood, ask whom you want?"

With a slight degree of hesitation, and a look of measured caution, the stranger replied, "that he wanted Lord Ottery, I have a letter to deliver into his own hands."

Some undefined suspicion, as to the person and the nature of his mission, as connected with his son's lately avowed opinions, darted across Lord Honiton's mind, and he said,

"I will conduct you to Lord Ottery," and as he rode by the side of the ambiguous person, he asked, "do you come from the Continent?"

He answered, "Yes! I am only just arrived in England."

"Are you quite a stranger in this country?"

"Not entirely, I have never been at Inglewood before, but I have often been at Graystock."

On this information light seemed to dart on Lord Honiton's mind, and when arrived at his house he walked in, followed by the stranger, desiring a servant in the hall to let his son know he wished to see him in his room, whither he led the stranger.

When Lord Ottery entered he changed colour, and it seemed difficult for him to articulate, even to breathe, yet he acknowledged the stranger as an acquaintance, and addressed him as Father Francesco.

Lord Honiton perceiving that no communication would be made in his presence, said, "Frederic, I have accidentally met this person, who enquired for you, he seems to have some secret mission; much as I wish for the confidence of my son I will not *force* it, I leave you together; if your friend wishes for any refreshment, let it be brought to him in this room, and in your presence, and let him depart as he came, I do not wish to excite curiosity in my household, whatever I may feel myself."

All this was conducted as Lord Honiton had desired, and when Father Francesco departed, Lord

Ottery retired to his own room to read the dispatches he had brought, and when dinner was announced to him, he begged to be excused attending it, as he had letters to write for the Continent.

• It was rather a *triste* dinner, two of the family absent, and probably from the same cause. How contrary to the doctrine Lady Honiton always held forth, that well bred girls, and probably she thought high bred sons, had none but interested aristocratic feelings, in short, no *hearts*, those were vulgar plebeian appendages to the human frame ; that important organ and all its various beatings—its joys—and its anguish, were only for ordinary people. It was in her estimation a mark of high blood, that which could be traced to her one hundred and ninety-seven kings, to get above the feelings belonging to human nature. Those feelings which are so lavishly bestowed on us by our Almighty Father, to lead us to our arduous and respective duties, and enable us to fulfil them ; but which require, nevertheless, the strictest guard and regulation ; feelings, that when under the control of religious principles, lead to all that is estimable in human nature, but

“ When ill directed they pursue the wrong,

• They add new strength to what before was strong.”

Lady Honiton had not been without these feelings her-

self; she came from a country where they are peculiarly warm, and, till warped by the world, they had been one of her greatest charms. And dreading these feelings in her daughters, she had succeeded in making her eldest a frivolous, heartless coquette; happily these baneful opinions had spread no farther. She had not as yet much to congratulate herself on their success; they had neither purchased a brilliant establishment for Lady Adelaide, nor brought content to the bosom of her anxious speculating mother. In truth, if vanity and insensibility can have few pains, they can have no real pleasures.

Lord Honiton said nothing to his family of Lord Ottery's visitor, and hoped he had come and gone unobserved. But Miss O'Brian's room being on that side of the house by which Lord Honiton and his companion had entered, and being herself one of those curious people who are always on the look out; she not only saw the arrival, but watched the departure, and thought she had some faint recollection of having seen the mysterious visiter once at Greystock.

In the course of the evening she ventured to ask Lady Honiton, if there was any thing material, or more than usual, the matter with Lord Ottery.

“ Oh my dear creature, there is always something *material* the matter with him, body and mind; and

though I cannot find out what it is, it distracts me, and makes me quite wretched."

Miss O'Brian was not without her suspicions, but they had been ill received once, and therefore she did not hazard them again.

It has been said that time only *aggravates* and does not *cure* anything; but certainly grief and suspense may be *alleviated* by time.

Lord Honiton had frequent letters from General Clayton, and though no regular accounts had come of Colonel Neville's being out of danger, yet so eagerly do people look out for promotion, that if no regular mail, or official account had been received from Malta, there had been private letters, and no mention made of Colonel Neville's *death* by those who might have profited by it; he certainly therefore was not dead, and those fevers are life, or death, so that his hopes were reviving, and General Clayton said, when he had good news to send, he should soon follow it.

He forgot this declaration, and arrived unexpectedly at Inglewood, and Lady Lousia's maid, with the usual indiscretion of ignorant persons, their eagerness to communicate news, told her lady that General Clayton was arrived, and my lord out; his friend finding the house empty, and not knowing of Lady Louisa's indisposition, walked towards the farm, which Lord Honi-

ton generally visited at the beginning, or end of his ride.

Poor Lady Louisa's sufferings were great on receiving this intelligence; but as the first dinner bell rang, a slip of paper was put into her hand, from her kind father with "good news from Malta!"

So much does the mind influence the body, that Lady Louisa, notwithstanding her late indisposition, wished to have joined the party in the evening; but she had not courage to see General Clayton, or to let him see the havoc Colonel Neville's illness had made in her health and spirits.

The following morning she received him in her dressing-room, he was all that was fatherly and affectionate towards his nephew, and most gratifying to her was the sense he expressed of the honour her regard did his family.

There was another person deeply interested in Colonel Clayton's arrival, Miss O'Brien had selected her most becoming cap for that day, and gave Lady Honiton a little hint of her promise of tempting him into a fit of the ~~gout~~, by saying, "Really this ragout is the most exquisite thing I ever tasted, Mr. Williams has outdone himself, do my lord let me recommend it to you, I would offer it to General Clayton, if I was aware of his taste."

"Oh, madam," replied the general, "you are too good: but I have lately discovered that I am one of those unfortunate persons, indeed, I believe they are far too numerous, who are dyspeptic. I live quite by rule, scarcely any thing agrees with me but burned bread and water; I would not touch that dish for all His Majesty's dominions; indeed, I take charcoal before I dare touch any thing."

"Charcoal," exclaimed all the ladies, "what do you mean, General!"

"Oh," replied he, "it is the most fashionable medicine now, *pure carbon*, and I have reason to like it better than ever, as I believe it has saved the life of my nephew, at Malta: they give it with great success in the fever prevalent there, and at Paris they take it for every disease under heaven. The fine ladies take it constantly, and carry it in their reticules in the form of *bon bons*."

"But what is it good for?" enquired Miss O'Brian.

"It is a sweetener, corrector, and purifier; but the English ladies do not patronize garlic, so they do not need it."

It appeared that Gen. Clayton had studied Paris on diet, as well as Philips and Graham, and dreaded the monster *dyspepsia* in every dish, and was really

living like an Anchorite. What chance was there of a *profitable fit of gout*? there was much more danger of a paralysis; for the circulation which had been accustomed to be pushed rather too far by generous living, might now stagnate, for want of its accustomed stimulus.

At breakfast next morning, a plate of dandelion was placed before General Clayton; he put some between slices of dry toast, and some he made into tea.

“Do, my lord,” said Lady Honiton, “taste those rolls,” pointing to one amongst the various plates of fancy bread on the table, “Williams has got some famous receipt for them, and he has tormented me for several days past about them, but I have always forgot to mention it.”

“If Lord Honiton will not try them, do you, Juliet, I ordered one to be buttered hot, as I know your national taste for hot bread.”

Miss O’Brian said it was excellent, and strongly recommended it to General Clayton.

“A thousand thanks, but not for worlds would I touch it, there is dyspepsia in every atom, rather let me persuade you to try my dandelion, I assure you the tea is far better than either hyson or souchong, for it strengthens instead of relaxes the stomach, and no salad can exceed this.”

Miss O'Brian tasted both, and thought them dreadfully bitter and nauseous, but was assured that a little use made them pleasant.

When taking her usual drive with Lady Honiton in the poney pheaton, Miss O'Brian said, "really this General of yours will poison me, instead of my captivating him! as to gout I am sure he has forsworn that."

"Well, never mind, a fit of *dyspepsia*, commonly called *indigestion*, will do as well."

"Pardon me, they are widely different, my father used to call gout a *gentleman's* disease, but nothing could be more vulgar than an indigestion, besides there is nothing interesting in a bilious attack, it is over, and the person is better than before, no opportunity for *des petits soins*, like a lame hand, or a gouty twinge."

"You may make one as useful as the other," said Lady Honiton, "I am not so new to generalship, nor ought you to be either, Juliet, that you cannot change your ground, if one point of attack fails; it is quite as easy to give an indigestion, as a fit of gout. Do interest yourself in this charcoal, nay, you may remember Dr. Mac Alpine told us the other day, that the most perfect charcoal was made from diamonds, what say you to sacrificing your brooch on such an

occasion? it is only one of our Irish diamonds, and however brilliant, are like our poor country, always despised; who knows it might become as celebrated as Cleopatra's pearl? it is very combustible, and may set both hearts on fire."

Miss O'Brian laughed heartily at the idea; poor Lady Honiton was too deeply lacerated to enjoy even her own joke.

But she observed at dinner, that Miss O'Brian referred to General Clayton as to the wholesomeness of every dish, and he rivalled Sancho Panza's physician in his prohibitions. Lady Clara not only enjoyed the scene, but promoted it, by temptations in opposition to this system, well knowing Miss O'Brian's taste for French dishes and high cookery.

For a few days Lord Ottery rallied a little, and was, with Lady Louisa, able to join the family party, yet it was evident to every eye that his disease made rapid progress, though this might not be visible from *day to day*, it was a flattering disease; but his cough and oppressed breathing made his anxious father think it might be necessary for him to winter in a warmer climate; and he was hesitating as to the steps he should take respecting the approaching election, when a letter arrived from Sir Godfrey Blisset, saying he should very soon be on that side of the county, and hoped he

might be allowed to pay his respects at Inglewood, and take Lord Honiton's commands on the election business.

This letter determined Lord Honiton to release his son from all annoyance on the subject, and give the thing entirely up. In communicating this intelligence to Lord Ottery, he was so forcibly struck with his debility, that he insisted he should have advice, and offered to send to London for any physician he would name; his son did not refuse the offer, and begged Dr. Dwillan might be the person, if he was in England. This was not a name on the list of fashionable physicians, but Lord Ottery said he had known him abroad, and derived benefit from his prescriptions. This was sufficient recommendation, though the invalid deprecated the idea that his advice was *necessary*, but in this particular he yielded to the wishes of his father who had so kindly consulted his, in the electioneering business; assuring Lord Honiton that he would find Dr. Dwillan a very well informed and agreeable person, he had been a great traveller.

During the interval necessary for his obeying the summons, Sir Godfrey Blisset arrived, bringing a beautiful little Blenheim spaniel he had promised to Lady Adelaide. Lady Honiton was rather annoyed by the reception that both the dog and his master

received from her daughter, who was quite ridiculous about the dog; it was a well educated dog certainly, but had not been used to be petted by a fine lady, and at dinner it was made so troublesome, and annoying by Lady Adelaide's feeding, and caressing, that her mother lost all patience, and requested Sir Godfrey to let his servant, whom the dog knew, take it out of the room; there was no appeal from an order of Lady Honiton's; her daughter coloured and pouted a little, but soon resumed her smiles, feeling that she was on the winning side of the post.

Miss O'Brian was deep in discussion on wholesome diet, and previous to dinner, had been presented by General Clayton with a box of charcoal *bon bons*, the first she took stuck in her throat, and nearly choked her through the first course.

During the evening Lady Adelaide received Sir Godfrey's marked attentions with such decided approbation that her displeased mother could not endure witnessing what she could not prevent, and retired to her own apartment.

CHAPTER XX.

AMONGST the letters that arrived as usual during breakfast the following morning, the General had one of a very agreeable complexion. His nephew's illness was likely to accelerate his return to England, and on his arrival he would obtain his promotion; and the military commandant at Madras was so ill as to be on his voyage home; this he communicated very delicately to Lady Louisa.

Lady Honiton had a letter from Lady Willoughby, *part* of which she read aloud, saying, “that as it was at Inglewood their acquaintance with Mr. Dallas began, she felt she ought first to announce there, that the excellent character they had heard of him, and the handsome and liberal conduct of his father, had induced Sir Henry to accept him as the husband of his eldest daughter.”

Much pleasure at this news was expressed by most of the party, excepting Miss O'Brian, who could not help saying, "that man must have been *né coiffé*, I wish my poor Terance was ever likely to have half his luck," many favourable traits in Mr. Dallas' character were mentioned by some of the party, a part of the letter was suppressed by Lady Honiton, it said that Lady Willoughby was happy to add that Helen had *refused* the Marquis St. Leonard, for though she felt she ought not to interfere either in the advancement or happiness of her child, she could never have considered the latter likely to be permanently promoted, by an union with a man of so fickle a temper, and with so weak an understanding.

It was a bitter mortification to Lady Honiton that Helen Willoughby had the opportunity of *rejecting* the man, she had taken such pains, and lavished so much tact to *obtain* for her daughter. But it would have been a still greater mortification, if that little rustic had become Marchioness of St. Leonard; she could not doubt the truth of Lady Willoughby's assertion, she was a woman not to be doubted, had such a circumstance been told her by a worldly mother, she would have given no credit to it. But though she did not broach this information publicly, she told it to her daughters, in the hope it would rouse some latent

feelings in Lady Adelaide's bosom, not in unison with her present object of preference, but the wish was vain, she said it was a good joke, and she should have liked to see how the little animal looked when he was rejected by his charmer, she seemed too much enchanted with her own prospects, to be vulnerable on any other subject, and turned from the conversation to caress her new favourite *Coquin*.

In the course of the forenoon, Dr. Dwillan arrived. Lulled by the favourable report of his servant, notwithstanding the various symptoms of her son's disease, Lady Honiton's hopes were reviving, and the physician, though he did not confirm them, was cautious of damping them too much.

He was aware, as all in his profession are, that the evil comes heavy enough without being aggravated by anticipation. Lord Honiton, though less satisfied on the subject, was yet willing to cling to hope also. At luncheon he commended his son to Dr. Dwillan's care, and the horses coming to the door, and accompanied by his daughters Adelaide and Clara, General Clayton, and Sir Godfrey Blisset, he took the road towards Rose Castle. Going through the woods they were sometimes obliged to go singly, at others, Lord Honiton led the way, General Clayton, and Lady Clara followed, and Sir Godfrey and Lady Adelaide brought up the rear.

Passing through the gate where Miss Willoughby had her fall, Sir Godfrey said to his companion, “ Do you remember this spot ? Happy Dallas ! Don’t think, Lady Adelaide, I meditate giving you a fall, ^ but I would go through ten times more than Dallas did on that occasion, to be so rewarded.”

Lady Adelaide felt the colour mount to her cheeks, and though she turned her head away, she showed no sign of displeasure ; and Sir Godfrey pursued his theme, till both parties understood each other ; and he obtained her consent to apply to Lord Honiton ; it was given with more coquetry, than feeling ; but such was her character, and she determined to give herself the power of retracting, if his fortune should not turn out as splendid as she expected. She had no objection to him personally, rather the contrary ; but she had been brought up to the trade of *matrimonial speculation*, and it had scared the better feelings of her heart.

At dinner they were seated together, and opposite Miss O’Brian ; and the understanding between them was not lost on her, spite of the general and his dyspepsia ; and his endless dissertations on the mischief contained in every made dash, and its condiments.

In the course of the evening, like a busy-body-thankless, Miss O’Brian could not help observing to Lady Honiton, “ say what you will, I am more and more

convinced the thing is *decided*; you were not in the way of observing what was going on at dinner, but I was, and Lady Adelaide's manner was such, that if she has not accepted Sir Godfrey, she is using him very ill, but I think *he* had no doubt in *his* manner, it was quite assured."

"Well! well!" said Lady Honiton, "leave the monster time to bring forth such a horror; one thing I rejoice at just now, that is, the De Cliffords are far away on their tour through the Highlands, I hope they will long remain there, for her prying curiosity just now would be intolerable, it would have driven me mad; whatever is to be borne, will have passed its worst when she returns."

Alas! Lady Honiton hardly dared at that moment think what the worst was to be.

In the course of the evening Sir Godfrey had a conference with Lord Honiton, and his offers of settlement were so generous, and his fortune so much larger than even Lord Honiton had imagined, and his conduct respecting this election so handsome, that provided Lady Adelaide did not object, and on this point Sir Godfrey felt pretty secure, no obstacle was offered on Lord Honiton's part.

He intended to confer on this subject with Lady Honiton, but when he came to his room she seemed

asleep. She had retired that evening particularly happy on Lord Ottery's account, she had not seen him so well, or seeming to enjoy their circle so much for some time ; the arrival of his physician, like the sight of a dentist, had seemed to cure many of his ills ; he was to be sure particularly attentive to Sir Godfrey, but that might be occasioned by his behaviour on the election business ; she knew also, there had been a conference with Lord Honiton, but that might also be on the same subject. She determined to dream of her son, and *try* to be happy ; not open her eyes to unpleasant intelligence from another quarter, and her Lord was not willing to disturb her slumbers, he was aware the subject he had to communicate would not please her.

The following morning Sir Godfrey and Lady Adelaide met in the breakfast room before any of the rest of the party assembled. Lovers certainly have some peculiar sort of instinct on those occasions, whether it arises from nervous irritability, from sleepless nights, or whatever cause, they devise and achieve certain happy moments of meeting, that astonish duller minds, and which seem “made by the gods” on purpose. Of course in this, Lady Adelaide heard what her father had said, and herself confirmed the happiness of her lover.

In the midst of breakfast, and when the demerits of

, coffee was in full discussion, a servant came in with rather a hurried and mysterious air, and whispered Lord Honiton, who instantly left the table.

“What can have called papa away in such a hurry ?” said Lady Clara.

“Oh, if your curiosity is excited whenever the bailiff wants your father,” said Lady Honiton, “it may always be on the stretch.”

Others of the party saw it was no *common* occurrence. Miss O’Brian and Sir Godfrey, who, as rising in the ascendant she was paying court to, exchanged looks of alarm; and there seemed a sort of breathless suspense amongst the party, that a few vain efforts were made to remove.

Minutes are hours on such occasions, and though it could not be more than ten minutes that Lord Honiton was absent, it seemed an age, and when he did return, his pale and agitated countenance shewed, indeed, that no *common* occurrence had happened. But, to compose himself, he attempted so resume his breakfast. Lady Honiton’s penetrating eye saw how vain was the attempt, and at the same moment, Lady Clara said,

“ Dear papa, is anything the matter ?” *

And Lady Honiton exclaimed, “ Good God, my lord, what ails you ?”

He replied, with a very agitated voice, “ Nothing ails me.”

“ Frederic !” she exclaimed, “ oh, tell me ?”

“ He has,” said Lord Honiton, “ had a severe fit of coughing, and, I fear, broken a blood vessel !!!”

Lady Honiton fell back in her chair, and went into violent hysterics, and Ladies Adelaide and Clara burst into tears.

Poor Lady Louisa, more used to control her own feelings, was the only one of the family collected enough to assist Miss O’Brien in her attentions to Lady Honiton, who was soon removed to her apartment, followed by her weeping daughters.

When they had left the room, Lord Honiton was more communicative to his guests ; it was some alleviation to him to tell his anguish to those who would sympathize with him. He had not been allowed to see his son. Dr. Dwillan thought the slightest agitation dangerous ; but the report of his state was most afflicting.

After this information, and Lord Honiton had left the room, General Clayton ordered horses, as soon as they could be procured, and set off on a visit to his niece, leaving a kind note for Lord Honiton.

Sir Godfrey Blisset followed his example, and

ordered his equipage to the door. We are led to believe that, besides a note to Lord Honiton, to take leave, he left a little billet for Lady Adelaide, its contents we know not.

Great was the distress into which the family at Inglewood were plunged; to the younger branches of it the blow was quite unexpected, they had seen their brother out of health, but Lady Louisa was the only one who watched him with anxious forebodings.

Lord Honiton was frequently at his son's door, but resisted seeing him, lest it should augment his disease. In the evening he desired to see Dr. Dwillan, and inquired him to say candidly if he considered the case hopeless? if he had ever known such a case restored?

Dr. Dwillan replied, "that he had seen many instances of a broken blood vessel recovered, even on the lungs; but much depended on its being an accidental disease—not brought on by *mental* anxiety." And he so strenuously enforced the importance of his patient having a tranquil mind, that Lord Honiton said, "If there is anything preying on the mind of my beloved son, I am ignorant of it."

"Can that really be the case?" replied Dr. Dwillan, "though I have had some reason to suspect it: but under the present circumstances I do not feel I am guilty of a breach of confidence, if I enlighten your

lordship. My acquaintance with Lord Ottery began at Berlin, but previous to that, in the year 1825, I was suddenly called on to attend a nobleman already, it was the Earl of Dunster, perhaps you may know him, my lord."

"Not personally," said Lord Honiton, but I believe he is a valetudinarian, or a hypochondriac."

"It was not on his account that my professional services were required, but for some friend. We travelled with the utmost possible expedition, and when arrived near Lubec, I was taken to a convent of Black penitents to see my patient, who was a nun. I could only communicate with her through a grate, she was brought to it on a couch by several of the sisters. She was in a deplorable state of weakness, indeed decrepitude, though under forty years of age, but grief and austerity seemed to have done the work of time. In my visits to her I saw a young lady, evidently of rank, and two attendants, a Chanoinesse and a Priest, but all three unconnected with the convent, the only chance *sœur Angelica*, as she was called, had of recovering, was by removal from a damp cell in which I was at last allowed to visit her! and taking her to a purer air, and some relaxation from the severe discipline of her order. Permission for this could only be obtained from the Pope, and it was a favour seldom granted; but

such was the anxious interest Lord Dunster took in the recluse, he determined to go himself to Rome, and endeavour to obtain this favour, through the cardinal secretary Gonsalvo, with whom he was acquainted. I was left in charge of the sick sister, and so frequently saw the young lady I have mentioned by the side of her pallet, I could not help feeling anxious to learn who they were; and, from an acquaintance I made with the Chanoinesse, who constantly attended her young charge, I learnt that the nun was the daughter of the Count of Hanau; and her mother of the royal house of Bragapza, that Lord Dunster, from the very interesting circumstance of being wounded in rescuing the Count from robbers, had become an inmate in his chateau, and finally, by his consent, had married his only daughter. The mother, who was a great bigot, and under the influence of her confessor, strongly objected to the match. Some months after it had taken place, Lord Mahon (as he then was) was called to England by the death of his father; circumstances induced him to leave his young wife with her own family, intending to return for her. His absence was rather longer than he expected, and not receiving his letters as usual, he hurried back to Hanau. He found his father-in-law dead, of wounds he had received at the battle of Wagram, himself the father of a daughter, and his unfortu-

nate wife insane, in consequence of her mother and her priests having worked on her mind, and persuaded her, that connecting herself by marriage with a *heretic* would subject her to eternal reprobation, and could only be expiated by a life of penance and seclusion in a convent. After a time she recovered her reason, but resolved to resign her husband, and take the veil in the rigid convent of Black penitents. Lord Dunster was broken-hearted, but he had no choice between resigning his wife or seeing her a hopeless maniac, he consented to the first of these miserable alternatives ; and her only request at parting was, that their child might be brought up in the Catholic faith, and left so near her, that she might occasionally see her through the grate in the chapel of her convent.

“Lady Constantia was placed under the care of Mademoiselle Reinsbie, a Chanoinesse of the order of St. Agatha, daughter of the person who had educated her mother ; her father established her at Lubec with this lady, and Father Francesco as her confessor, who having performed the marriage ceremony to Lord Dunster and to his unfortunate wife, he was always anxious to secure as a witness to its legality, whenever the death of Countess Hanau should give her daughter and granddaughter a title to possess the estate and title of Rosenberg ; the late Count’s other possessions being

a fief of the empire. In this situation the young lady remained till she was seventeen, when the death of her grandmother gave her those rights, which her mother's profession had renounced, as she was then dead to the world. Under these circumstances Lord Dunster prevailed on his wife to let their daughter come to England, and be introduced into that society in which she might be called to fill an exalted station. It was not long after her first season in London had began that she was suddenly recalled to attend her dying mother, and at the same time I was taken by Lord Dunster to give any professional assistance.

"On the continent, Lord Dunster used his Norman title of Lord Abberville, and was therefore not easily recognized ; and whilst he was gone to Rome, the *sœur Angelica* grew daily worse ; but when the time of his expected return drew near, I received a message from his servant, informing me his master, by a hurried journey, and anxiety of mind, had contracted the fever and malaria of the country, and was in a dying state at Munich ; and that during his delirium he so constantly called for me, the faithful Vincent implored me to come to him ; my presence was of so little use to the nun, and I had so much reason to believe my remedies were forbidden by the priests, as having the contamination of heresy belonging to them, that I felt no scruple in obeying this summons.

“On my arrival, I found Lord Abberville in a frightful delirium from his fever, that subsided, but he sunk under its effects; though not till he committed to my charge, the Pope’s permission for the temporary removal of the sœur Angelica, and all the necessary documents respecting his marriage, together with his will.

“I closed his eyes, and buried him at Munich, and hastened to his unfortunate wife, but she was too ill to be willing to avail herself of the pope’s permission, indeed it was now become useless, she died in the arms of her daughter, who in her last hours she acknowledged before the proper authorities, to secure to her the large possessions she was entitled to.

“Having communicated the documents with which I had been intrusted to Lord Abbeville’s executors, and finding my situation very uncomfortable amongst those by whom the young lady was summoned, and directed; I left Lubec, and went to Constance, where I had before practised. There I was accidentally called on to attend your son, Lord Ottery, who had a severe attack of illness.

“One day, in the course of conversation, I mentioned the Comtesse Rosenberg, and found he had known her in London, and been deeply enamoured of her, but had searched every where in vain for any trace of her.”

“As soon as he was recovered, at his earnest desire

I accompanied him to Resenberg, on the borders of Denmark, where she resided, he renewed his acquaintance, and after some time made his proposals. Whether left to herself the lady would have listened to him, I cannot say ; but she was in the hands of determined bigots, and their influence was too powerful over her, to allow her to do so, unless he embraced the catholic faith ; she pleaded a promise to her mother, and the wretchedness that had attended the marriage of her parent from their difference in faith.

“Lord Ottery engaged in arguments and discussions with her confessor and his associates, and used as they are to the subtleties of polemic disputation, he was unable to cope with them ; and to gratify Comtesse Rosenberg he went to Rome to discourse with some Jesuits. The course of study they prescribed, and some austerities they recommended, to procure the influence, (as they pretended) of the Holy Spirit, entirely undermined his health.

“He left Rome, I fear more than half converted, but that would not do, the lady, or rather those by whom she was governed, advised her to insist that he should renounce his country with his religion, and adopt both the one, and the other to which he was attached.

“It was with his mind torn by contending feelings, and in a great state of agitation, he prepared to return

to you ; at Milan he was again dangerously ill, I attended him, and thought very ill of him. He has, I understand, lately received the Comtesse's final answer, it is a *negative*, and he has declared to me since my arrival here, that he has no wish to live, and indeed I believe he is sincere."

Lord Honiton was most deeply affected in every way by this recital. He could hardly regret his son had not succeeded in forming a connexion that would have led him to abjure his religion and his country, and all his prospects and stake in it. And yet to see him fall a victim to the conflict was anguish unutterable.

He asked Dr. Dwillan if it was not a very unusual case.

He said, "No!" the struggles of conscience were the severest the human frame could encounter ; and when to them was added disappointed affection, it too often, and in the best natures, produced such effects. The only consolation he could offer was, that if Lord Ottery's mind could be calmed, there were hopes that this last attack, which seemed yielding, might not prove so serious as he at first apprehended.

This painful interview ended, Lord Honiton retired to muse on his own wretchedness, and consider the least distressing mode of imparting Dr. Dwillan's communications to his family. They were greatly afflicted ; Miss

O'Brian was admitted into the confidence, though she was far from understanding *all* their feelings, for her own *was* rather triumphant, as they related to the religious conflict; she admired Comtesse Rosenberg, though with no intention of taking her as a model. Lady Honiton was reminded by her of the suspicion she had entertained of Lord Ottery's attachment.

Although the hemorrhage with which Lord Ottery was afflicted had much abated, yet his strength had declined, and some alarming symptoms had appeared; so that Dr. Dwillan felt obliged to check the hopes, which he had but faintly raised, but which the family put too favourable a construction on.

Two days after his conversation with Lord Honiton, he had the painful task of breaking to him that his patient was decidedly worse; that he was charged with an important request from Lord Ottery, whom he had informed of the communication he had made, which he was happy to say, he had not disapproved of.

But before he delivered this request, Lord Ottery had desired that the letter brought by the person his father had introduced, might be shown him, as that had sealed his fate. It was translated from the German, by Dr. Dwillan.

To Lord Ottery,

It is not necessary to assure you I have given the most serious consideration to the subject of our last conversation. I have consulted my understanding, and a still better adviser, Father Clement. I dared not trust *my heart*, that would have misled me, and you also, to our eternal misery.

After the fatal warning of my beloved parents ; the solemn promise I made to one of them on her death-bed ; I cannot ! I *dare not !* connect myself with any one—however dear—who is not fully received into the bosom of our holy Church. Were you to make the profession solely to obtain my hand, the motive would destroy the act, in the eyes of Him, at the foot of whose Cross we must yield up all our earthly desires. You love your family ; you ought to love them—you love your country, you have a great and conspicuous station to maintain in it; you cannot have me, and retain these—forget me, I implore you. But do not, I implore you, forget those tenets of our holy faith, which have, I trust, brought conviction to your mind.

I have taken my resolution, I could not be happy unless you renounced what is so dear to you—I should not be happy if I saw you miserable, and I have not the vanity to imagine I could recompense you for what you would lose. Here let us take leave of each other in

this world. And before the cross of our blessed Saviour—at the shrine of the beloved Mother of God, I shall pray *constantly, frequently, and fervently*, that you may tread that path, and hold fast *that faith*, which will unite us in realms of eternal bliss.

Adieu, &c.,

C. R.

Lord Honiton, deeply affected by this letter, and aware of the conflict his son must have endured, prepared to hear his request, which was, that the last duties of religion might be afforded to him according to the rites of the *Roman Catholic Church*.

The unhappy father was long silent, the struggles of his mind, of his parental feelings, were great, to refuse the last request of a beloved, and dying, son was exquisitely painful, it was *impossible*, he begged to have a little time to deliberate.

Dr. Dwillan said, “he felt it his painful duty to say there was not much time likely to be granted. Some very alarming symptoms had shown themselves, he could not answer for more than forty-eight hours, if so long,” and, after a pause, added, “I am anxious to postpone the fulfilment of Lord Ottery’s request as long as I can, for, after *extreme unction*, no medicine can be administered, and there may, in the worst cases, be alleviation given; but I dare not trifle either with your lordship or my patient by giving false hopes.

Lord Honiton was quite overset by this declaration, but after a long and thoughtful pause, he said, "there is a priest at Greystock; a groom shall be ready very early to-morrow morning to take *your* orders, Dr. Dwillan; but I must leave the arrangement to you." And Lord Honiton retired, overwhelmed with various and conflicting emotions.

Dr. Dwillan sent for Father O'Leary, but as no favourable symptoms appeared, he advised Lord Ottery's seeing his family before the last rites were performed.

It was a most afflicting scene, the invalid supported himself with great fortitude, he took a most tender and affectionate leave of his mother.

To Lady Adelaide he said, "Value Blisset as he deserves, and he will make you happy." To Lady Louisa he said, "God bless you, my dear sister, and Neville too, and make you both as happy as you deserve, tell him I said so!" He most tenderly pressed Lady Clara to his bosom, and charged her with his affectionate remembrance to his brother.

Dr. Dwillan felt it necessary to shorten this agitating scene, and let his patient remain some hours quiet before his spiritual guide was summoned.

Lord Honiton of course could not be present, or partake of the last Sacrament with his son, but when he

had received the *extreme unction*, and the Crucifix was placed on his bosom, his afflicted father was again admitted, and kept the hand of his beloved son for a long time pressed between his, when the pressure was returned, he in a feeble voice repeated the *Miserere*, and his spirit left its earthly tabernacle.

To lose a beloved and amiable son is a grief only parents can estimate. This affliction to Lord Honiton had deep aggravation. He was not so intolerant as to doubt but that a sincere Catholic might be an object of God's mercy, and obtain everlasting life. He hoped that a merciful God would pardon the errors of his creatures ; but were his son's *involuntary* errors ? had he not been brought up in a *purer* faith, and had not *love*, an overwhelming affection, destroyed his principles, and perverted his mind ? this was a bitter reflection, but he earnestly prayed the God of all mercy to pardon him.

The first person who visited Lord Honiton in his affliction was the good Bishop of Carlisle. His conversation had as much comfort in it, as the case would admit of.

There is little to add to the family history. After the mourning of Lord Ottery was over, Lady Adelaide Aston was united to Sir Godfrey Blisset, and on the same day, Lady Louisa to Colonel Neville, and the latter

embarked immediately for Madras. Lady Honiton, broken in spirits by grief and disappointment, made no further objection to either match.

The return of Arthur Aston, now Lord Ottery, was great joy to all, particularly Lady Clara; he brought an unopened packet with his brother's seal on it, which proved to be the letter he had written from Milan, but being put in the ambassador's bag without a direction, was returned. It contained a full explanation of his sentiments. And the diminished family after the late events, returned to its usual habits.

Miss O'Brian, though she did not succeed in making any impression on the imaginary dyspepsia of General Clayton, devoted her attention to the *real* maladies of Mr. Elliot, the occupier of Greystock, who wanted a nurse, and that nurse a Catholic. She gained a most comfortable establishment for herself and her faithful Florence, and, eventually, a jointure, that enabled her to enjoy the London season, in a good house in Charles-street, Grosvenor-square.

Of the Comtesse of Rosenberg we must say a few words: deeply afflicted by Lord Ottery's death, she was often the victim of self-reproach and severe penance, imagining, that had she been less decided, she might have attained the important end she struggled for, without its afflicting termination; but she drew

comfort from his having been received into the bosom of her church, and dying a *good Catholic*.

She never married ; and having on her father's death refused to claim his personal property, which he had left her, his estates going to the heir at law, Lady Gertrude succeeded to what her niece refused to put in her claim for.

The latter part of the Comtesse's life was occupied in founding, with the Pope's sanction, a religious house for twelve ladies, and she had the pleasure of seeing the Chanoiness Reinebie the first head of *Rosenberg Priory*.

THE CONCLUSION.

GENTLE READER,

If thou hast had patience with us so far, "bear with us a little longer." In olden times a fable with a *moral* was the mode of instruction. In Holy writ a *parable*, according to the Eastern usage. We live in a different era ; but a novel or a tale, however slight, without a *moral*, is time wasted to its readers.

Allow us an epilogue to explain the moral of these trifling pages. May those who *envy*, or those who would *imitate* the great, who believe that smiling faces and gay equipages *are* all they *seem*, learn from this slight sketch of their domestic life, that those brilliant exteriors often cover aching hearts ; that those who give great entertainments, and those who go to them, though

they press a pillow of down afterwards, too often feel it is to *them*, as one of thorns.

It has been said by the first literary man of the age, “that the character of a man is generally determined by his mother in the first seven years of his life, that she directs the bent of his mind.” If this is so, of what vital importance is it that women who are destined for mothers should have their principles firmly established, their minds highly cultivated, rather than their whole time given to mere accomplishments. Had the former been the case with Lady Honiton, she might have given her son strength of principle that would have saved him from those errors of faith that cost him, first his happiness, and then his life. On the contrary, she was a striking proof that what is planned by *ambition* and *vanity* ends in *vexation of spirit*.

COUNTRY HOUSES.

CHAPTER I.

OLD MAIDS AND BAS BLUES

Silent and chaste she steals along,
Far from the world's gay busy throng ;
With gentle, yet prevailing, force,
Intent upon her destined course ;
Graceful and useful all she does,
Blessing, and blessed where 'er she goes.

Cowper.

Nothing is proof against the general curse
Of *Vanity*, that seizes all below.

Ibid.

A witty writer in one of the periodicals of the day, who certainly never wrote a novel, or he would have had that fellow feeling which “makes one wondrous

kind," has been pleased for an amusement, very like the boys in the fable towards the frogs, "sport to them, but death to us," to throw a stumbling-block in the way of us poor authors, by ridiculing the different modes in which we begin, and end such works; and concludes his remarks by recommending us, as the only unhacknied mode, to take our opening sentence from the old song of Allay Croker,

" There lived a man in a Ballenure so crazy."

There was no need to make our path more thorny, for "God help us!" those who cater for the public know too well what a variety of palates they have to please! there is but *one* overpowering *Ude* in our species of literature who succeeds equally well in all its various beginnings and endings. But for us humbler souls, who dare not be servile imitators, no untrodden path is left.

The poet may indulge his imagination to its most romantic extent, in descriptions of climate and scenery, such as those who never travelled beyond their fire-sides, can hardly have ever dreamt of.

The painter may take his model from Venus, or from a primrose girl in the street, and, embellished by genius, he may, by the variety of his colours, and the delicacy of his touch, throw an indescribable charm over his work, and it is appreciated according to the taste of the observer; and so few, compared

with the mass of novel readers, even *pretend* to be judges of painting, or poetry, their ordeal is a joke to ours; for every thing above a house-maid is a self-erected judge of a *novel*.

If we attempt to enumerate the beauties of our heroine, she is not perhaps to the taste of some baby ensign in the Guards, or that of a mustached cornet of Lancers, they each vote her a *bore* in the second page; and put their omnipotent fiat on our book, by saying, to the first young lady in whose hands they see it,

• “Oh, don’t read that horrid book! it is sad stuff I assure you, the heroine has blue eyes, how insipid! and auburn hair, that is to say, fiery red! how intolerable!”

These sage remarks will do more *against* a work on which *we* may have consumed midnight oil, wax candles, and our own precious eye-sight to boot—than all the sweet encomiums—and *sweet* they are to the feelings of a poor fagging author!—that the Literary Gazette, the Athenaeum, &c., can pour into our ravished ears.

We wish, both for our own sake, and that of all labourers in the same vocation, that we could begin with a *dramatis personæ raisonné*, something like those in the old plays, as,

The Duke of Dalmahoe, an Usurper
Theodore Count of Bellamain, in love with Almeria, the Duke's
daughter, affianced by him to
Don Positivus
Almeria, daughter to the duke, residing in a convent
Jesica her companion and favourite
Pages, waiting maids, &c.

Then we might take a hint from the British Theatre, and put against Almeria's name—first dressed in white satin and pearls, a long train, supported by a page dressed in scarlet and gold; afterwards as a novice of St. Agatha, with a white veil; her confidante first in grey satin, trimmed with white fringe, and a high head dress of the fashion of Philip Augustus, and embroidered sandals; but this we fear would never satisfy our young lady readers, or their maids, or their dress-makers. No! nor even Messrs. Stephanhoff and Co., who may want a little more detail, should they so far honour us, as to design a print for some future edition of our work, published amongst the *Standard Novels*, which, like all others of our craft, we naturally hope may be our fate.

Now under all these oppressing circumstances, we confess ourselves in a most painful dilemma; we have a very interesting young lady, and her amiable aunt, to introduce to our readers: how to do it, we know not—they were both employed—both sitting in the same room, and dressed, as most ladies of their station are

dressed in a morning. Well ! we will take courage, and make the plunge into *our* cold bath !

Caroline Shirley was painting a minature from a print of Sir Thomas Lawrence's—the little red riding-hood ; and holding her copy at arm's length, to take a fresh view of its general effect. She exclaimed,

“ I hope my Aunt Beaumont's party will be very *blue* to night.”

No answer was returned to this observation by her companion, who seemed busy counting a list of names in a narrow folio, vellum-covered, book before her.

Caroline was like all girls of her age, and did not wish her most trifling words, or actions, to pass wholly unnoticed. After a pause, as if she thought her companion was either deaf, or pre-occupied, she repeated the exclamation—

“ I hope we shall have a very *blue* party to-night.”

“ Nine times dipped, I suppose you mean, Caroline,” replied Miss Shirley, “ but pray what do you mean by being *blue*, I should like to know *your* definition of it ?”

“ Being so wise, my dear aunt, that no body can understand us.”

“ It is much more likely some of the party may be misunderstood for want of wisdom, than for its

super-abundance : your sister, for example, Caroline ; if she attempts to talk of chemistry, and geology, and a thousand other things, of which she can know nothing but a few common terms."

" But you forget, my dear aunt, it is not to hear Emily talk, we are going to Stanhope-street ; there will be some of my aunt's most choice associates to meet the great astronomer, Fahrenheit, and the celebrated chemist, Gay Lussac."

" And," replied her aunt, " any other lions that my sister Beaumont, and her coajutor Miss Briggs, can muster. Such is their rage for producing something to wonder at in their parties, that I am always afraid they will at last be like a certain Countess of eccentric memory, who, when distressed for a wonder, actually, whilst her friends were at dinner with her, had brought into her drawing-room, and concealed behind a curtain, a horse with two heads, three tails, or six legs, or some such monstruousity, and exhibited him to her astonished company."

" But you forget, my dear aunt, what an adept Miss Briggs is in collecting together people, who can show each other off to the greatest advantage, and then she has always the assistance of Count St. Ange, who knows all the distinguished foreigners, whether for talent, or rank, who come to this country."

Miss Shirley shook her head, and, after a few moments silence, replied,

“ All the *adventurers* you mean, Caroline !”

“ Oh ! aunt, I never knew you before either suspicious, or censorious : pardon me, if I think you a little, a very little, of both this morning.”

“ Believe me, Caroline, I entertain no unjust, nor uncalled for suspicions ; I have only lived long enough in the world to understand a little of its humbug, and to see through a good deal of its vanity ; but I should not expose myself to the suspicion even from you, of being either uncandid, or jaundiced, if I did not fear the baneful influence that *vanity*, *flattery*, and *pretension* may have on *your* sister, as they already have on *mine* ; and feeling an anxious desire to keep, if I can, the unsophisticated mind of one I love so dearly as I do you, Caroline, from its contamination.”

At this moment something dimmed the eyes of Caroline, she could not distinctly see her painting ; it might have been a tear ! So, laying down her pencil, she gently drew towards the sofa on which her aunt was seated, and putting her arm round her neck, kissed her cheek most affectionately.

The evening came, and as they seated themselves in the carriage, Caroline said,

"I hope, dear aunt, you are not going to do penance to gratify me; but will find something to amuse yourself also?"

"I shall not make the trial, Caroline; I don't much admire your Aunt Beaumont's set, and, when I have put you under her charge, I am going for an hour or two to my friend, Lady Graham, and will call for you as I come back."

When again in the carriage, Miss Shirley said,

"Caroline, however well you may have been amused, I cannot help feeling regret that you were not with me; for, though visiting a nearly blind old woman, turned of eighty, does not sound very promising, it would, to *you*, as it was to me, have been a very interesting evening; for I met there Lady Dickenson, who has passed most of her life in India. She went out the wife of a cadet, and returned the widow of a General Officer, with a large fortune, dearly acquired in Indian warfare; but she knew your father when he first went there, a very young man; and she speaks well of his present wife, whom she has known from her infancy. But what would have instructed you particularly in the conversation, was the difference that, from the account each gave of their *séjour* there, had taken place in the manners of Calcutta, in the last fifty years; and as you and

Emily are destined so soon to make your débüt in that horizon, I should have been glad you had gained the information I did."

"Oh! my dear aunt," exclaimed Caroline, hiding her face with both her hands, as if to keep out the frightful prospect, "don't talk of Calcutta! my heart sickens at the very name of India, I shall never be half so happy *there*, as I am now in England with you."

"It is in the power of every well-regulated mind, Caroline, to extract *content*, if not absolute happiness, from every situation; and you are so young, the world is so new to you, and you have a disposition so fitted to enjoy its rational pleasures, I don't see why you should not be as happy in India as anywhere; it is our duty to conform to our situation, whatsoever it is; and we are always equal to our duties, when we determine to do them; and we are promised if we do so, *that assistance* which will make our path easy. Remember, that your duty to your father should make you wish to comply with his will and endeavour to make his latter years cheerful and happy; he has been obliged to make a great sacrifice in so long parting with you and Emily, and always remember, that she who resigns her own gratification for the sake of others,

' Smooths not another's rugged path alone,
But scatters roses to adorn her own.' "

" I do not forget," replied Caroline, " that I am going to an affectionate, kind, father, but I know also that I am *not* going to a tender, but to a *step-mother*, who does not know us, and may not like us; and she has girls of her own growing up."

" It is your duty, as well as your interest, to conciliate her; the happiness of your father will very much depend on your doing so; and her age will make her a more suitable companion than you expect: Lady Dickenson says she is a very pleasing person; and you must not forget, also, how little there is in India of our sort of domestic life, and its comforts, and dear Caroline," patting her on the cheek, " probably you will be married, and have an establishment of your own, soon after you get there."

Caroline gave a groan, at the thought of a yellow faced husband, in a brown scratch wig; and the carriage stopped at home.

At breakfast, the next morning, Miss Shirley asked her niece, " if the evening had turned out as *blue* as she expected? and if she had been much edified?"

Caroline shook her head as portentously as ever

Lord Burleigh did ; and said, “ Excepting some beautiful new books my aunt has just got, particularly Batty’s last views, I must own, a duller evening I never passed : every one seemed to expect to be amused by their neighbour, and no one contributed any thing themselves, excepting Count St. Ange, who was ‘ all things by turns, and nothing long,’ and Miss Briggs, who exerted all her powers. But it would not do—the wheels of the machine of enjoyment were stuck fast in the slough of dullness, and nothing could move them.”

“ Oh, but Mons. Gay Lussac ?”

“ A failure, a nephew, or perhaps no relation to the great chemist, a man who, evidently, had never before been in such good company ; he looked shy, awkward, and frightened ; not at all self-possessed, like a Frenchman.”

“ And Fahrenheit ?”

“ A still worse failure ; he might be a *maker* of thermometers, but never, I should guess, an *inventor* ; though the people followed them both from room to room, as the children in the street do Punch. Miss Wilhelmina Briggs I saw was provoked, but she tried to carry it off amongst her set. My aunt and Emily seemed occupied and satisfied with the flattery of St. Ange. They both looked their best. My aunt

has put up a most becoming drapery of pink muslin over the sopha at the end of the Drawing-room, where she usually sits, and she looks like a sort of presiding deity, and Emily, as her attendant priestess. Miss Briggs bustled about, and tried to shove people together. Miss Talbot talked loud, but it would not do, and I am sure every body went away, saying to themselves, “What a horrid, stupid evening!”

Caroline had hardly finished her account, and given her aunt a second dish of tea, when Mr. Melbourne was announced; he came to inform Miss Shirley that a vessel would sail for Calcutta the next day, to ask for her letters, and to beg one of recommendation to her brother, for a young friend of his own.

Miss Shirley soon after left the room to make up her own and Caroline's despatch, and write the requested letter to her brother, and desired her niece to entertain Mr. Melbourne till her return, adding, “ You must exert yourself, Caroline, and be very agreeable, that our friend may not think my absence unconscionably long.”

Caroline rather wished to be the entertained, than the entertainer, and after a few common place observations, said,

"Mr. Melbourne, you, as a friend of my father and my aunts, must be well acquainted with our family history; do not think my questions impertinent, but it does so surprize me to see the difference between Aunt Shirley and Aunt Beaumont, I cannot account for it?"

"Perhaps," replied Mr. Melbourne, "you do not know that they are only *half* sisters, and there is as great a disparity in their ages as there is difference in their dispositions and characters, and those of their mothers also. Mrs. Beaumont was the child of your grandfather's *old age*, and his *young wife*, not a very prudent connexion, all circumstances considered. Whether it was from accident or design that this daughter was named Fanny, I cannot pretend to say, but the combination was not wholly inaplicable. A Lady Fanny Shirley was the object of a notorious and romantic passion in the Lord Chesterfield of polished memory, and your aunt, at seventeen, realized the celebrated picture his verses drew,

'When Fanny blooming fair first caught my ravished sight.'

She was, as all unexpected children are, indulged and pampered to excess. Your Aunt Shirley left her father's roof on his second marriage, to live with her eldest brother; he soon after married, and she spent

the first year of his wedded life amongst the relations of her mother in Scotland ; but at the close of it, was called back to that brother, a widower and left with an infant son, to the motherless child of whom she took the charge, with again that of her brother's house ; she devoted all a mother's care, and felt all her anxiety, and with more than a mother's responsibility, for she had not parental authority,—she nobly discharged her important duty. The child was, from his birth, infirm as to bodily health, but, as is often the case, precocious in intellect and talents ; when he was about seven or eight years old, you and your sister came over from India for your education, and, I grieve to say, motherless also. Miss Shirley would have liked to have educated you herself, with her nephew ; arduous as would have been the task, her firm mind would not have shrunk from it ; but the disease, under which this interesting boy was fast hastening to a better world, required so much attendance, and such anxious care, as was incompatible with the active exertions which the education of you and your sister would have required.

“ It had been your father's particular desire that you should both be highly accomplished ; and, as he had pointed out a seminary where the children of some of his most intimate friends were sent for edu-

cation, and who, like you, were destined to return to the East, you were both sent to Mrs. Lomax's; you know the rest, as it respects yourselves, but perhaps not that your aunt all but lost her life nursing her nephew through his long, and suffering, illness; his faithful nurse, who had brought him up from infancy, did fall a sacrifice to fatigue and exertion.

" After the death of his son, this second, and double affliction had such an alarming effect, not only on your uncle Shirley's state of health, but of spirits also, that his friends at last roused him, and persuaded him to try travelling; it has succeeded, and he is now, with recovered spirits, in Egypt, busily searching for the remains of antiquity, and your aunt took a cottage near Southampton which she has let. On you and your sister being of an age to leave Mrs. Lomax, you are her guest here till you sail for India, as your sister is with her god-mother, Mrs. Beaumont.

" I can only exhort *you* to profit by the golden opportunity of such conversation, and such advice as your aunt Shirley, and few others only, are qualified to give; you will have reason to the last hour of your life to bless the time you have lived with her."

Caroline expressed herself sensible of her advantages in the warmest terms, but added, " You have not now, Mr. Melbourne, told me much of aunt Beaumont's

history, I see her rich, admired and *recherché*; who, or what, was Mr. Beaumont?"

"I had," replied Mr. Melbourne, "an old friend, who, when he suspected any one of intending to tell him a long story, always stopped him, by saying, 'for God's sake, my good friend, don't begin at *Adam*!' but I must begin with the birth, or at least the education, of your aunt Beaumont: never was more fuss made to have a girl accomplished and perfect, and, to do Madam Minarette, her governess, justice, neither she, nor the numerous masters resorted to, were negligent; but it was not the *education of the mind*, it was showy and superficial. Under the retrospective rule by which I have just declared myself, not intending to be influenced, I must tell you, that, about the time of your aunt's christening, or it might be sooner, a certain Mr. Beaumont, of Beaumont Abbey, in the county of Warwick came of age, and into the possession of about fifteen thousand pounds a year, besides an accumulation of ready money, notwithstanding his father had committed the sin of building a fine house on the plan of an Italian Villa, and had gone himself to Italy for pictures and statues, to decorate it with. He did not live to witness its last finish, and it was first opened with a three days' series of fêtes, to celebrate his only son's majority.

"Mr. Beaumont's mother, careful soul! thought by bringing all the youth and beauty of the three adjacent counties of Warwick, Worcester, and Stafford, to Beaumont Abbey, she should give her son the best chance of choosing a mistress for his beautiful house; the Lady-mothers of these contiguous counties were "nothing loth," to bring their fair daughters to such a fortunate, and very promising mart. But whether it was that the young heir had so many various duties of hospitality to attend to, he had no time to discriminate, for in general it is the idle who are most apt to fall in love; or whether "his hour" was not yet come, or his "fate ripe," all Cupid's arrows, and they were shot from bright eyes, fell harmless to the ground, *she* who was to be the fortunate person was in her cradle.

"This brilliant opportunity failing,—and Mr. Beaumont's mother retiring to Bath, where she could have her own little circle, and her cribbage; her son got entirely out of female society, and his life was spent *hospitably, liberally and convivially*, but not domestically. At the end of eighteen years, either growing a little tired of this mode of life, or feeling a few twinges of family gout, he resolved, having every other earthly good—to try after "nature's last best gift"—a wife. He had always pos-

sessed the *best* horses, the *best* hounds, the *best* wines, and the *best* cook, why should he not have the *fairest* and most *lovely* wife? He resolved to try his fate at the next Warwick races, the Course, and the Ball would give him full opportunity of judging both by day-light, and candle-light; on the Course he saw *three* Ladies he equally admired, and he bid fair to have shared the difficulty Paris did with his golden apple, had he not luckily determined to leave the event entirely to *chance*: he went early to the ball, resolved to propose to the *first* of these Goddess's who entered the ball-room.

“Your Aunt was the fortunate person, and ‘Fanny (Shirley) blooming fair *first* caught his ravished sight.’ Cæsar’s conquest was not more rapid—he saw—proposed—was accepted—and married—before the news of his intentions reached the remote parts of the county. To be sure, never were coach-makers so hurried to build carriages: jewellers so tormented to re-set family jewels—the lawyers made shorter work than usual, and the lovely bride was decorated, and as her husband called it, *trotted out*, to the whole country with breathless haste. But the sort of life he now entered into was not congenial to Mr. Beaumont’s habits; and when the hunting and shooting season came, giving his lovely bride *carte*

blanche, as to fitting up her *boudoir*, altering her *flower garden*, and new furnishing her *conservatory* with the choicest plants ; he left her to herself : the season of the year interrupted some of these occupations, and the lovely Fanny began to find hunting days long and dull, and to sigh for a companion ; her wishes were law to Mr. Beaumont, who, if not a fond husband, was a very indulgent one ; and what was wanted he easily found.

“ Miss Wilhelmina Briggs, the daughter of the curate of the parish where Mr. Shirley lived, had been brought up for a governess ; but a small independence, bequeathed her just before her father’s death, saved her from that arduous task : but as it was maintenance, and no more, she was too happy, on Miss Shirley’s French governess, Madame Mirette’s health obliging her to return to her native mountains, to accept the offer of being a companion to Miss Shirley ; but she preserved her independence by declining to take any salary ; she lived with her till her marriage, and was now rejoiced to be invited to Beaumont Abbey. She had a smattering of all those accomplishments required in a governess ; knew a little Italian, enough to puzzle out the mere sense of Petrarch, without comprehending his beauties ; talked indifferent French fluently, and had,

in her own opinion, a great taste for *les beaux arts*, *et les belles lettres*, and possessed, most perfectly, the science of *flattery*. She well knew the ground she was now called to tread on ; found her young friend dull, disappointed, and yet surrounded by every luxury and indulgence that could be desired. She therefore endeavoured to turn her to mental occupation ; they read Italian together : Miss Briggs read aloud Byron, Moore, and Walter Scott. As her husband was ready to gratify every wish of his wife's, that did not interfere with his own pursuits and pleasures, Mrs. Beaumont had masters of all sorts down to Beaumont Abbey ; he only made one condition, that they dined in the steward's room; but he soon complained to his master, that they were dissatisfied if they had not French wines, and of the quantity they drank when they had. Mr. Beaumont sent them all off, compromised the matter with his lady, by assuring her, that if she would have instructoresses, he should not interfere.

"Miss Briggs lulled her friend's ears with the grossest adulation ; it is strange, and true also, that gross flattery on mental qualities, is more easily listened to and believed than on personal ones ; it can only be accounted for by the circumstance that it is difficult to measure mental endowments, and a

glass will sometimes tell truth of bodily deficiencies, it will shew a gray hair, or a wrinkle. Miss Briggs made her patroness believe herself a second Aspasia.

“ Her husband, though greatly disappointed at not having an heir, was a good-natured man; he liked to see his wife look beautiful at the head of his table. On Briggy or Willey as he occasionally called her, he cut his dull jokes: her situation was attended with so many solid advantages, she laughed at them, and took the names in good part, rather as proofs of favour than otherwise. She often *talked* of “ being *obliged* to go home on business,” though it was well known her lodgings were let indefinitely; and, by one little manœuvre or other, and above all, by *making* herself *useful*, she continued to obtain so firm a footing in the family, it would have been easier to have removed a part of the house than the visitor of its mistress. The only point on which Mr. Beaumont refused to comply with his wife’s wishes was going to London for the spring; in that he was firm; his own pursuits and amusements were in the country, and there he would remain; and Miss Briggs very sensibly advised Mrs. Beaumont to acquiesce cheerfully in this restriction, and wait time and opportunity for its being rescinded.

“ Several years rolled on in the same even tenor,

when one day, coming in very wet from shooting, Mr. Beaumont stood sometime in his wet clothes to look at a new horse; was seized with a fever, and died before the end of the week. He was fully sensible of his situation, arranged his affairs as well as the time, and his disease, would allow; made his will, and, when his last moments approached, sent for his wife, who had not, from ignorance, been so efficient a nurse as the old house-keeper, or Miss Briggs; but he breathed his last with her hand feebly grasped. She was more frightened, and shocked, than grieved—she had never before seen death—it horrified her, and threw her into successive hysterics.

“I was a trustee to her marriage settlement, and was therefore sent for as her friend and representative, to meet the heir and executors. The lawyer, who made the will, insisted on its being read in her presence; the circumstances under which it was made rendered it necessarily short. She was with much difficulty calmed for the scene, which *I* shall never forget, it is on such unusual occasions that character, or turn of mind, when it does not amount to character, is seen in its fullest force; the lady was seated on a sofa surrounded by the appliances of grief, and covered so entirely with a nearly transparent veil, that she reminded me of one of those nuns who are doomed, in

such a garb, to kneel four hours at a time before a crucifix, it would altogether have made a subject for Wilkie: the usual preamble of giving every thing *in trust to* the executors roused her a little, and when it came to be added, all and every thing for the *use* of my beloved wife, a faint smile, or something like one, stole over her features, and was visible through her veil. But, whether it was accident, or a little malicious design in the lawyer who read the will, I never found out; but he was, at this place, seized with a fit of coughing, that lasted some seconds; and admitted of a little intelligence, and whispering, between the ladies; when he resumed his occupation, going back, and again reading the passage that gave every thing to Mrs. Beaumont, added, for her life or so long as she remains *unmarried!* on that event every thing was to go to his nephew, Beaumont Hastings, excepting her own fortune settled at her marriage, and one thousand pounds a year. What a revulsion of feeling a few words sometimes produces!

“ I own, I have always been of opinion, and many occasions in my life have occurred to confirm it, that persons most nearly interested in the contents of a will, should never be required to be present at its opening: if the parties were dear to them, it is an unnecessary harrassing of their feelings, to have their

wounds opened by perhaps unexpected instances of tender remembrance ; if on the contrary its contents are unfavourable, they are called to a severe and unnecessary trial, and often an exposure of feelings they would not have been guilty of, unless taken by surprise. I really felt very much for Mrs. Beaumont, but a kind legacy of five hundred pounds to Miss Briggs put *her* in the best possible mood of administering consolation to her friend.

" When I went the next morning to take leave of Mrs. Beaumont, I found her table covered with prints of costumes, and I afterwards heard she took her weeds from those of Mary Queen of Scots, and Catherine Par in Lodges's portraits of eminent persons. That there was any *heart* in her grief is hardly fair to expect ; her husband had never sought to gain her affections, and of course she never gave them ; he treated her with indulgent kindness, though rather as a spoilt child ; she was satisfied ; but this unlucky clause which said, " you shall not be *happier*," did away for a time with the recollection of what had been *content*, if not a warmer feeling.

" I learnt afterwards that the seclusion required in widowhood was very irksome to her, and at the end of a fortnight she intreated Miss Briggs, as she could not stir herself, or send her cards of thanks, to go and

see her neighbour, Lady Worthley, and hear something that was new to cheer her. I was with my family visiting at Wedglock park, when Miss Briggs, in full *legacy mourning*, with blackened coach and servants, arrived: before me she was a little cautious in expatiating on the *grief* of the widow, but ventured to ask Lady Worthley, as a most accurate judge in those matters, how long she thought Mrs. Beaumont ought to keep on her mourning? The visit was paid, and the reported answer to this question communicated to Mrs. Beaumont, who started when she heard, “certainly not *less* than two years; Lady Derventdale, the richest of all widows, mourned three, if not four, years.”

“But she was not restrained from marrying again,” was the reply, “that is the unkindest cut of all: but it does not signify, I know I must die of this seclusion, and I am *resigned*.”

“People always use that word when they are the most impatient under any trial; real resignation is seen in action, not evaporated in words.

“Miss Briggs was really distressed at seeing her friend in such a state of hopeless depression. What did it signify how becoming and interesting she had made her weeds?

• “Where none admire, 'tis useless to excel:”
at last she hazarded a proposal, by saying,

“ You have often, dearest Mrs. Beaumont, expressed a wish to go abroad : why should not you do so now, it would divert your melancholy to see different places, and foreign customs ; and I do not think people are so strict in other countries about mourning as we are in England.”

“ Mrs. Beaumont started with joy at the proposal ; a courier, and a travelling carriage were soon procured, and she and her friend ran over to the Continent for nearly three years ; they visited the usual places, picked up the usual information, and returned to England released from odious weeds, and many wholesome prejudices, and ready to begin a new career of life, full of *literature* and *vertú*, Miss Briggs grown ten times more important than ever. She tried all she could to alter her own plebeian name, for no one gave her the offer of an effectual change, but softening the *i* into *e*, or lopping off the two last letters, would not do, she must wait for a happier alteration.

“ A few months were spent at Beaumont Abbey, on their return ; and then was fitted up the house in Stanhope-street, and arranged in it all the treasures collected in Italy, where a rich English lady was sure to pay highly, and be cheated. Her first season is now near its close, and you, Miss Caroline,

know, as well as I do, the set of extraordinary people and foreigners with whom she is surrounded ; they know her wealth, but they know not, at least, one I could name, does not know, its restrictions."

" My aunt Beaumont, I fancy, though I am no judge, has got but an indifferent set of acquaintance. I think so because aunt Shirley will not mix with them."

" You cannot follow a better judgment than that of your excellent, your *incomparably* excellent, aunt Shirley ; I know no person so nearly angelic as she is."

" You have amply gratified my curiosity about aunt Beaumont ; I now understand her, and her Briggs, but I wish I dare ask for the same gratification about my *own* particularly dear aunt."

" Oh, no !" replied Mr. Melbourne, " her sorrows are sacred, I dare not approach their shrine."

" Has she, indeed, had such very deep sorrows ? I know she lost a darling nephew."

" And," he replied, " experienced a far, far greater loss in one who, had he been spared, would have made her the happiest of women ; but it was otherwise ordained, and she is only now the finest specimen of pious, nay, of cheerful, resignation the world ever saw ; you cannot do better than imitate her example in every thing, only may you be spared her trials and her griefs ; I consider you as most fortu-

nate, and most particularly so, when compared with your sister, who, I fear, where she is, can only learn habits of luxury and self indulgence, that she will have too much opportunity of putting in practice in India."

"Would we were never going there!" exclaimed Caroline.

"Oh, you must not repine at what so many young ladies would rejoice at; take a lesson from your aunt, smooth difficulties, and submit cheerfully to what you may not exactly like, or fancy you do not like; you have never tried India—there is your natural home, and there your best chance of an advantageous establishment; young ladies in this country are very numerous; but what ought most powerfully to influence your acquiescence in your destination is the painful sacrifice your aunt is making for *your* advantage by leaving that retirement from the world, that seclusion most congenial to her own feelings; where, in the exercise of every benevolent and active virtue, she is best serving *Him* whose hand has chastened her, and preparing to meet in happier regions him who has been withdrawn from these. She requires the solace of retirement; a mind like hers can best find its repose there."

She entered as this was said, and delivering her letters, Mr. Melbourne was obliged to hurry away.

C H A P T E R II.

THE morning after the failure of Mrs. Beaumont's *blue* party, she was sitting, in a lady's reading chair, newly invented by Gillow, turning over the leaves of an uncut, and unpublished novel that Colbourn had just sent for her opinion.

Count St. Ange was announced, but the lady did not turn her head, only, when she heard his footstep close to her, put out one finger, but without looking off from the page she was reading.

"Don't disturb Emily, Count, for she is writing letters for me; you will find *your friend*, Miss Briggs, in the boudoir."

St. Ange felt it was not his usual welcome—he looked despair, but he was not seen, or not heeded, and he did as he was desired, and implored his

friend, Miss Briggs, to tell him *what* he had done : she replied,

“ Only producing the failure of last night, which has put my sweet friend a little out of humour ; how could you be so absurd, Count, as to bring such shabby people here ? ”

“ Oh, I was deceived, myself, I never saw them till I took them up at their lodgings, to bring here ; they brought me letters of recommendation, and Madame Beaumont always wishes to have what is *new*, and *scarce*. ”

“ Well ! well ! you must be more discreet, another time : now make your peace by setting her last Italian sonnet to music : you will find it in that blue album, I believe, in the first page—but a word of advice ; don’t make too much fuss with your penitence ; it will only tempt prolonged displeasure.”

Whilst St. Ange was looking for the Sonnet, Miss Jane Talbot, or, as her familiars called her, Jack Talbot, entered. She had just dismounted from her horse, looked as if she had been riding a race : throwing off her hat, running her fingers through her Brutus’d hair, and declaring it was so confounded hot, she knew not what to do, she threw herself into a chair, and kept up her excitement, by

knocking the end of her whip against the sole of her boot.

"What can make you ride, Jane, at this time of day?"

"Oh, my dear creature! I can ride at no other with an unbroke mare, if I attempted to gallop Miss Fidget when the Park is full, I should upset all the pretty Misses who ride Fozard's rocking horses; but later in the day, I shall ride a quieter horse, and more like a gentlewoman; but I wanted so to see you, or I should not have got off my mare, but I have ordered Joe to walk her about till she is cool, she is as clever a little thing as you ever saw, and quite up to my weight; but I gave a fortune for her."

"I think you must have had the Park to yourself, at least."

"Oh, no! I assure you not, for all the old Dows in their close bonnets, and their quiet ponies take this time for their exercise; but I don't care for them, they are most of them old stagers, and at least know how to keep on, or have an old fat groom to protect them, ha! ha! ha! I love to put them in a little fright by dashing by them; but I came to talk to you, and console you a little about your party last night."

"No more of that, Hal an thou lovest me."

"I suppose the exquisite Count must do some penance for bringing you two such rag-a-muffins who had never been in such good company before, if they had, I'll be shot."

"Hush," cried Mrs. Beaumont, putting up her finger, and speaking low, "I have banished him my royal presence, and turned him over to Briggs, it is too much trouble to be really angry."

"By Jupiter!" exclaimed Miss Talbot, taking up the Morning Post, and running her eyes down the *material* column, "but you are *here*, failure and all!"

"Heavens! and earth!" exclaimed Mrs. Beaumont.

"Oh, not so bad either, you know, my dear, that if you will have your parties announced in this abominable paper, you must expect to have them commented on, 'it follows as the night the day.' Well, now you need not be armed with any extraordinary degree of fortitude on the occasion. In the list of fashionable parties, the last is Mrs. Beaumont's (of Stanhope Street) *literary Soirée*, which was not so large as usual, nor so well attended, as it always deserves to be; but we have been informed the reason was, there was a large meeting at the Athenæum to

decide on the comparative merits of Greek and Roman cement, which are both so much used in England. Specimens of those used in the time of Romulus and Alcibiades were to be thoroughly examined; and there was also a most numerous assemblage of members at the Travellers' Club to introduce the two *Landers*, who are lately elected. The African travellers read some very interesting parts of their journals, and exhibited some curious fossils from the neighbourhood of Timbuctoo. They, with many of the members, adjourned to Dr. Macfarlane's in Bruton-street, where a very brilliant party of literary and fashionable persons were listening to Pasta and her pupil Aldibrontine, who is coming out on Saturday next in *Medea*."

Mrs. Beaumont bit her lip and said,

"I do think nothing can be more provoking than that such a charlatan as that Macfarlane, should get *every body*, and *every thing*; all the wonders, all the new singers, and musicians, and all the rare and fine books before they are seen any where else. You have no idea of the flattery that poor I am obliged to use to Murray and Colbourn in order to get hold of a book two days before every body has it, and yet I generally buy, at least all that is worth buying. I have just, as a vast favour, got Pretensions, I was

looking it over when you came in, and little worth the pains it seems, how that old Mac manages is past my comprehension."

"There no great mystery in it, if you knew his history."

"Thank God, I neither know that, nor himself."

"I will tell it you, for it is really curious by what odd means, and chances people get on in this whimsical world. Know then, he was originally a sort of errand boy in a chemist's shop, but he had some capacity: one day he accidentally broke two bottles of very different materials, but the mixture on the floor produced some curious chrystalizations, and they were shewn by his master to the professor at St. Andrew's, who, delighted with the idea of having such a genius about him, took the boy as an assistant; but he grew a little tired of the drudgery after he had been a few years at it, and Lord Ellenwater wanting a person to go abroad with his son, who was very ill, Macfarlane was recommended as able to prescribe a little for the poor boy's body, and assist his mind's improvement also; the first was all he was called on for, as the boy died at Nice, but left a letter, dictated no doubt by Mac himself, begging his father to provide for him. Lord Ellenwater fulfilled to his utmost the request, and got a place in the British Museum

tor him, and he got for himself a diploma of LLD., and there he is! (but he would not have done all without his wife,) there is a bit of romance about that: when at Milan, in the character of a physician, he was called on to attend an English young person at the academy of music there, a natural daughter of Lord —— bringing up for the Opera stage, the doctor fell in love with her, and on his return married and brought her to England, intending to produce her on the stage, if his present situation had not made it unnecessary, and wherefore all *her* acquaintance with the great singers when they come over, many of them were her fellow elevées at the academy."

"This you may think explains the mystery, but I own it makes me quite sick to be bashted by such a set; but I know there is no contending against professionals, so I will go down to Beaumont Abbey directly, and forget it all amongst my roses."

"Fye! fyel!" cried Miss Talbot, "don't be so poltroon: with your means, you may do any thing, and every thing; recollect this is only your first year and it takes three years in the most ordinary walk of good society, to get up a London acquaintance: go on, and you 'll prosper."

"No, no! the dream is over!"

"I'll tell you," rejoined Miss Talbot, "a bright thought that has just come into my head: why should this Scotch adventurer and these vile clubs be the only crack places? we women of spirit will have a distinct club, or society of our own, the ladies Literary, or Dilettante association, what shall we call it?"

"Oh, not association, that looks like a collection of Operatives."

"Pardon me, Mr. Burke says, when bad men combine, good men should associate; however, if you don't like it, we will find some other appropriate name; it shall be composed of all the ladies who have written, I mean printed and published, anything; no one else shall be eligible to be a member: we must have the Duchess of L—— for our Lady President; you, my dear Mrs. Beaumont, shall be Vice President; and we must get Lady Charlotte S—— and Lady Olivia B——. Oh! I'll warrant we have such a phalanx of wit and talent, as shall carry all before us. We will have our regular meetings, our secretary, our treasurer, and our proceedings duly registered; and published in the *Court Journal*."

"That will never do," said Mrs. Beaumont, "don't you know a poet has said,

'Without that odious creature man,
One can be nothing but a Nun?'"

"Well then, there shall be privileged nights, when each member shall give admittance to one man, will that do?"

"I do not think," said Mrs. Beaumont, "in these ungallant days, and in this ungallant country, the men will care a farthing whether they are admitted into *our* society or not; they like to herd together."

"You do not know them, my dear: what they can easily get, they do not care about; but from what they are *excluded* they strive after; take my word for it, they are always jealous of us in *intellectual* points. Adam would never have cared for the apple, if he had not been afraid of Eve's being wiser than himself. This love of being master runs through all his race, depend upon it; but Miss Fidget will get chilled, so I leave you and your assistant, Miss Briggs, to talk over our plan; I will think about it also, and report progress, as I go by this evening to the British Gallery, where there is an assembly; you are going?"

"No, I thought nobody went but artists' wives."

"Oh, you are quite mistaken, quantities of fine people go; it is early, on purpose not to interfere with their parties, and you have the best critique on painting possible; I'll call on you in my way perhaps, but don't wait for me; till then, good bye to you."

Not very long after Miss Talbot had taken her leave, Miss Briggs came to remind Mrs. Beaumont that they had engaged to go and hear a lecture given at Willis's rooms on the Greek and Italian poets, and to settle a dispute of whether the Thessalian Mythology was or was not *imaginative*.

"Oh," cried Mrs. Beaumont, "I cannot go, I am sick of such questions, they only puzzle me, I have really got a horrid nervous head-ache, which only quiet will cure, but do you go if you like it."

"Shall I take Emily?"

"Oh, no, I may want her to answer notes, I begin to think it will do her no good, as she is to make her fortune, as it is called, in the India market, to fill her head with *science* and *belles lettres*; in the country to which she is destined, women have not energy enough *to think*; but the carriage is at your service; you will be home, I conclude, before five o'clock, for I think perhaps a little stroll in Kensington Gardens before dinner may relieve my head."

Miss Briggs returned punctually, and, on their way to Kensington Gardens, recapitulated, as far as she was able, the subjects lectured on, without understanding an iota of the real pith of them, but she got up a few terms, and talked about Iambic, Trocaic, Anapastic Hexameters: "there were quantities of

people there, I assure you, Lord and Lady Clan-puzzle."

" And, I suppose," replied Mrs. Beaumont,

•
" Old Lady Mouser,
And the great Hanoverian Baron Penmouser."

" Well, you may laugh if you please, but I have been introduced to a most interesting person ; do you recollect our remarking that, at the end of all advertisements of Sir Walter Scott's works, there was always added, Mrs. Dalgairn's cookery ? Well, with this Mrs. Dalgairn, who is no cook, but a great friend of Sir Walter's, by name Miss Cummings, I have made acquaintance ; she has written a very learned, as well as popular, dissertation on the application of chemistry to *domestic* purposes ; not like Accum, frightening you with the poisonous articles put into every thing, but really *bona fide* teaching the application of acids and alkalies in every dish one eats, and proposing a sort of seminary to educate housekeepers, cooks, and kitchen maids, on the principles she lays down."

" Admirably calculated to produce the cholera!" interrupted Mrs. Beaumont.

" Quite the contrary, I assure you, it would be its most specific antidote ; she had all sorts of honours, a medal, &c. ; her paper is published in the

Medico Chemico Philosophical Journal at Edinburgh."

"Well, perhaps she may, but I have no desire to eat one of her dinners."

"Oh, but you *must*, I have pledged myself, and so has that excellent creature, Mr. Fleming, who introduced her to me, that *you* shall make her acquaintance, she is quite a charming person, though rather tall and gaunt in her appearance."

"A true, rawboned Scotch woman, I dare say."

"I must own she is a little national in her expressions, but she has a pleasant expression of countenance, and a soft voice, not such a sound as you would expect to come from her appearance."

"Oh yes, I see her, and all her horrid dishes before me."

"Indeed, my dear Mrs. Beaumont, your vision deceives you, it is no second sight believe me; but we must have this subject discussed another time."

Kensington Gardens were full, they met several they knew, amongst others Count St. Ange, whose timid approach to Mrs. Beaumont was almost ludicrous, but altogether the head-ache went away, by the air and excitement we suppose, and the lady returned in tolerable humour and spirits to dinner.

During Coffee, Mr. Crayon, who was by appoint-

ment to conduct them to the British Gallery, arrived. When there, the first picture opposite to the entrance was Mrs. Siddons, as the Tragic Muse, by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

"What a glorious picture is that, exclaimed Crayon! the most sublime portrait that ever was painted!"

"Do you think it superior to the Fornarina, or La Manto?"

"I don't think they bear any comparison," he replied: the "Fornarina and the La Manta are merely life, as the painter saw it, this is a sublime conception of something he did not see, only imagined beyond actual life. Sir Thomas Lawrence said it was "the finest portrait under the canopy of heaven," and that the two pictures he most envied Sir Joshua Reynolds having painted were—Mrs. Siddons, as the Tragic muse, and the Infant Academy."

As the party turned from this picture to look at an angel by Guido, a gentleman behind said to a companion in a low voice, but not so low, but it was heard,

"If I did not know that picture was three hundred years old, I should have thought it was painted from the lady before us."

There was resemblance enough to warrant Mrs.

Beaumont's appropriating the observation, and she felt (no doubt) highly gratified.

Crayon criticised other pictures, pointed out that of the three Ladies Walgrave, by Sir Joshua, as a fine contrast to Mrs. Siddons—her's *sublime*, their's *domestic*.

"But why," said he, addressing Mrs. Beaumont, "as you did not live in Sir Joshua's time, were you not painted by Lawrence? Every body, I mean every lady, should be painted in her full bloom."

"When I returned from abroad I wanted him to paint my portrait; but he was so engaged with copying Popes and Cardinals he could not find leisure, he deferred it till a future time, and now he is no more!"

"What a loss he is!" exclaimed Miss Briggs, "he was certainly the first of modern painters!"

"Pardon me," replied Crayon, "he was over-rated in his lifetime, and he has been unduly depreciated since his death: he possessed great *talent*, great *elegance of mind*, and a remarkably correct eye for likeness, which he transferred to his canvas; his portraits were the *beau-ideal* of the persons they represented; no one could mistake them: he made the ugly handsome, and, of course therefore, he pleased; he had great disadvantages, he had no regular education of any sort, especially as a painter; he was maintain-

ing his family by indifferent portraits, when he should have been studying at the Royal Academy, or in Italy."

"But he did go at last to Italy," said Miss Briggs, "and we heard of him in the gallery of the Vatican; he was speechless with admiration."

"But he went there," said Crayon, "too late to do him any good, or his life was not prolonged enough for him to shew it. His great misfortune was not painting really from nature."

"What can you mean," said Miss Briggs, "he had always a living sitter before him?"

"But it was not *real nature* he saw; it was *artificial* nature, if I may use the expression, or embellished nature: if he had taken a match-seller, or a primrose girl, out of the street, he would then have *painted* nature, as Sir Joshua did: instead of *rouged* ladies trying to look *pretty*, and statesmen endeavouring to look *wise*. I was never more disappointed in my life, than when I went into Lawrence's show room: it contained from two to three hundred half finished portraits, some, indeed many, of them admirably painted. But it was like an assembly at Devonshire House; there was no individuality amongst them, nor any imagination: every one was dressed in her usual dress, and in some af-

fected, though by her, naturalized, attitude. Even the two children of Mr. Calmady looked as if they had been prepared for sitting for their pictures ; their hair just combed and brushed, and themselves put into their attitudes."

"And yet," said Miss Briggs, "we have a royal gallery, painted by Sir Thomas, which is intended to hand him down to posterity with the most glorious epoch of our history!"

"And so it will," replied Crayon : "he was born for the time he lived in, and after ages will see the *cunning* of Metternich, the *hypocrisy* of Gonsalvo, and the *imbecility* of Pius VII., immortalized by Lawrence's hand ; but it is lucky George IV. did not follow up his plan, of having the beauties of his court painted by him, and collected into a gallery ; for they would have shrunk to nothing, by the side of the Vandykes at Windsor, nor did Lawrence leave behind him anything to compare with Sir Joshua's, Mrs. Musters, and Mrs. Bunbury ; and yet, I allow him to be a most *talented* painter, and most amiable man ; but he was, unfortunately, a precocious child, and brought forward much too soon ; and yet, in his character, and manners, he was remarkably diffident and unassuming."

"You think, then," said Miss Briggs, "if he had

had proper advantages, he would have been one of the first of modern painters; surely, he did sometimes attempt the *grand stile*, the *historic*."

" And always failed," replied Crayon, " it was not *in* him, if it had, it would have forced its way out, *genius* will not be fettered, it breaks down all barriers, but I allow your favourite *exquisite taste*, and a particularly quick and keen eye in discovering that minutiae of character in a countenance, on which the likeness often depends, and the most delicate hand in pourtraying it, that even artists were surprised at: his eyes were *superb*."

Miss Briggs liked nothing so well as such conversation as that now carrying on; and as Mrs. Beaumont had found out some friends she had met with at Naples, Sir George and Lady Thornby, with whom she was laughing over their adventures together in a voyage to Ischia. Miss Briggs went on with the subject of Sir Thomas Lawrence, by saying, " surely you think his Satan *historic*, and a fine picture?"

" I know you will hate me, and say I am an envious brother of the brush, but I do really think for his *fame*, his friends ought to have destroyed that picture: a more *bilious* devil was never seen. A man to be an *historic* painter must give his whole soul up

to *grand* ideas, and *grand* models, not to painting my Lady Fitzfancy in all her jewels. But I still say, there was more to *admire* and *esteem*, and more to *regret*, in Lawrence than in any man I ever knew; and I shall conclude my tirade on him, almost in his own words, a few days only before his death, to the beautiful Mrs. ——, who reproached him for not finishing any of his pictures, ‘I only wish I may live to finish *your’s*.’ And I wish this had been applied to your lovely friend Mrs. Beaumont, or rather that he had lived to do it.”

Amongst the assembly, large as it was, Mrs. Beaumont did not meet with many people she knew, and with the fever which rages every spring in London for locomotion, running from one hot crowded room to another, in search of what is never found, *amusement*, she declared her intention of going away, as she was to be at Lady Glenmorris’s party.

On Miss Briggs exclaiming, “What so soon? we have not been half round the room!”

Her friend added, “If you like it, stay here; as you are not going with Emily and me, the carriage shall come for you when it has taken us to Grosvenor-square; I dare say you will find friends here, and Mr. Crayon will be so good as to take care of you till you do.”

The party went all together to the last room : as they passed the doorway to that, Mr. Lyttleton, a young man of some fashion, was apparently glued to the wainscot like a Caryatide, only in a more lounging attitude, and a friend talking to him, seeing Mrs. Beaumont on Crayon's arm, and Emily and Miss Briggs on each side of St. Ange, he only said,

“ I see you do not want cavaliers, or I should offer myself.”

Miss Briggs only just went to the outer door of the great room, where a sort of screen to keep off the wind had been put up, but it often served the additional purpose of affording a retreat to those whose carriages could not get up ; here Miss Briggs placed herself, till her chaprone Mr. Crayon came back from handing Mrs. Beaumont to her carriage, and as the partition was only baize, she heard the following conversation :

“ I thought,” said Mr. Lyttleton’s companion, “you were on that tack, the Beaumont is as good as a Galleon to run down, why did you slacken sail ?”

“ Oh ! ” replied his friend, “ the prize is not worth much, only a very pretty woman, and they are plenty now-a-days, and besides I have no mind to be shot at to morrow by that fellow in the rear.”

“ Is he of that sort ? ” asked his companion ?

“ Yes, I believe so ; he has fought half a dozen duels, and, probably, carries a stiletto.”

“ But you did not used to mind those trifles ? ”

“ Nor do I now, if the thing is worth running the risk ? ”

“ But is it not so ; the world says she has twenty thousand a year ? ”

“ Pretty near I dare say, but she would not have it, if I made her Mrs. Lyttleton, and gave her the future advantage of being a Baroness.”

“ How so ? ”

“ Why, man, you are as dull as a drum, she loses her jointure if she marries ! ”

“ Oh ! oh ! then Beaumont Hastings comes in for it, does he ? —then, why does not he marry her, it would be the best possible speculation, he would then be *tenant in possession*. ”

“ Just because he is, or rather was, her husband’s *nephew*; so it is against the canonical law.”

“ Then why does not he make some bargain with her, release her from the bond, for half her revenue.”

“ That is no easy matter, though it might be done, if she had a very strong fancy to marry.”

“ Well ! and has she not, to that count what do you call him, or does he not know the circumstances she is under ? ”

“Perhaps he does not, or if he does, foreigners have such very odd notions of English customs : a great friend of my mother’s, a French woman of the highest rank, who on the reign of terror fled to England with three sons, and two very handsome daughters, (her husband having fallen under the guillotine,) told my mother her object was to marry one of the daughters to a rich Englishman, with whom she, and her whole family, might live, adding, ‘We might formerly have stickled greatly about *noble blood*, but now we shall lower our pretensions : do tell me of such a person, and procure me an introduction ; an heiress for one of my sons would do, but I should prefer settling a daughter !’—Perhaps St. Ange goes on something of a similar plan.”

“But who is he ?”

“That’s more than I can tell : he bears a good name *if it is his name*, and he has a fine estate and Chateau on the lake of Como, if *his own* word is to be taken—but I never believe Mrs. Beaumont will have him, though she may like him as an *attentif*, it would be realizing the fable of the dog and the shadow, unless that friend, alias *fiend*, who goes about with her, and has all the influence of an evil genius, *is* in league with him.”

“Who do you mean ?”

"That abomination in a rose coloured hat."

The person described just then appeared, she had heard the whole conversation, and was very little in a humour to enjoy the pictures, and as soon as the carriage returned went joyfully into it, and home to chew the cud of sweet and bitter fantasies ; she had her *doubts* on the subject of St. Ange, but she had no *proofs*, and she would not act upon conjecture ; things must take their course, she knew the value of her *own* position, and she would not hazard it for a trifle ; young men would say anything, it was not her interest to have Mrs. Beaumont marry, and she well knew that nothing but a title, and an equal degree of wealth to what she would forfeit, would tempt her—she was not a person with much—if any heart,—it would be as before, a match of interest, if she made one, and the Count's dangling and uncertainty kept other suitors off.

Mrs. Beaumont had, compared with London going out ladies, so small an acquaintance that she could not expect at any place to meet more than half a dozen. Unless a person is in the very highest and exclusive set, who "hang together like bees," any one, like Mrs. Beaumont, may go out six nights in a week, and find themselves in a different set, the *point d'appui* "being

an accidental acquaintance abroad, or an old neighbour in Warwickshire.

Lady Glenmorris was one of the last relics of a card playing set that flourished some fifty years ago ; and her house, and about three others were the only places where there was a regular weekly assembly and card tables ; the only change that had taken place in them, during the last half century, was the games played : now *écarté* prevailed, where perhaps *furo* had been formerly ; but, there were equally large sums of money won and lost, and particularly by the better.

Mrs. Beaumont sat down at a table with Mons. Le Fronde, whom she had known in Paris, and her niece and Count St. Ange stood behind her chair, she soon lost her ten sovereigns, and resigned her place, her headache returned with the heat, the Count handed both ladies to the carriage, and received a nod and good-night from Mrs. Beaumont, that gave him courage to call on her the following morning.

We have never yet introduced Miss Emily Shirley to our readers, and she was not, as far as personal appearance goes, a person quite to pass over ; she was a pretty, or rather a prettyish girl, owing much of her beauty, though it could hardly be called that, to youth-hood ; she was fair, had pretty soft eyes, lux-

uriant hair, and a very brilliant complexion, her character, like her countenance, had no distinguishing feature, she was anxious to be very accomplished, because she was told accomplishments were much valued, though little cultivated, in India; all her masters therefore were perfectly satisfied with her diligence; she went from French, to music, from Italian, to painting, with indefatigable industry; but to none she brought any *mind* — it was all parrot-like acquisition.

Not so her sister, she was happily under the care of one who taught her the value of *mind* above every thing, and led her to those studies and acquirements that strengthen the judgment, regulate the heart, and, above all, give those firm principles, and that trust, which, “the world cannot give,” and which it cannot take away.

CHAPTER III.

IN the arrangements for the morning, usually made at the breakfast table, Mrs. Beaumont desired Miss Briggs would represent her, and accompany Mr. Northby to Mawe's rooms, to select a small cabinet of minerals, as she did not feel disposed to go out so early as her appointment.

“ He will tell you what is the best, I only beg the cabinet may be ornamental, or that I may return it, when I have got another. I think just at the entrance to the bow-window under the small looking-glass in the front drawing-room, will be a good place, and then it will be reflected in the opposite glass—let there be a great many specimens of chrystals, they look so well by candle light.”

“ But if you do not go there with me,” said Miss

Briggs, "you will surely go to Miss Jenkins's in Sloane-street where Miss L—B—'s M. S. poem is to be read and criticised; there will be all the distinguished literary ladies, and some *Savans* also.

"Oh! no!" cried Mrs. Beaumont languidly, "I am tired of those sort of meetings, they don't get one on, at least in the circle I wish to move in. But do you go if you like it; make my excuses."

Miss Briggs knew her friend too well to urge the thing.

"You will ride to day, Emily, will you not?"

"If you please, dear aunt."

"I always please that you, and every one I love, should be amused in their own way."

"But *you* will be alone all the morning!" said Miss Briggs.

"So much the better, I don't feel the thing, *quiet* is the best for me, and I dare say I shall have people drop in."

"For heaven's sake, if you feel the least unwell why not send for Warren?" replied Miss Briggs.

"Oh, he would only laugh at my complaints, as he does at any that are not dangerous."

"Then let Western see you, he may think of some little nervous medicine that may restore you."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Beaumont laughing, "you are

really making a mountain of a mole hill, because I don't absolutely like a jumble into the Strand, and the unwholesome smell of a mineral shop, or listening two hours to a poem, that I can by and bye look over in half an hour, you want to fill my house with physicians and apothecaries. I will [take such a walk in Kensington Gardens, late in the day, as I did yesterday ; and I dare say I shall eat my dinner to your satisfaction, my good Willy, without either Warren or Western, so leave me to follow my own inclinations, and do the same by your's ; the chariot is at your disposal, for the whole morning if you like it, I shall go out in the barouche."

Mrs. Beaumont was not left long to solitude, for Miss Talbot came in as usual from her early ride ; she had seen Mrs. Beaumont for a moment the night before at Lady Glenmorris's, and said, *en passant*, " *Ça ira, ça ira,*" she now burst into the room in high spirits.

" Well, my dear creature, we go on surprizingly ; we have not, to be sure, got the little Duchess, she hangs back ; but I don't despair that at last she will come into our plan and make a good leader ; *en attendant* we have got Lady C— G—, Lady O— B—, and Miss Jenkins, and Mrs. Hemming ; and really," searching the breast pocket of her habit, " I

forget who, without my list: dear me! I hope I have not lost it in the park, I would not have it picked up by one of the club-men, for the world; for it has got on it the name of our institution, and it would be talked of over half the town, and a betting book opened on its success: oh, here it is! Now, give me, *me only*, the credit of the name, I will allow no one an atom of a share in it. You will never guess it, if I give you fifty years to do it in. The *Intellectania*. Is not that charming? Then *you* are, at all events, to be Vice Presidentess, and your friend, Miss Briggs, Secretary *ess*; there are a thousand other things to arrange—our seal, and motto, the first must be highly *imaginative*, the other *classical*; Lady Olivia will furnish them. Another season we must have a house, for I foresee our establishment will be very numerous; but for the latter part of this year, Lady O—— B—— and you, will, I dare say, allow alternate meetings at your houses: we mean first to elect the members, then the managing committee, and then form the rules by which our society is to be governed. No one can belong to it who has not had an original work appear *in print*; a sonnet, or copy of verses in one of the Annuals, will do; but it must be well authenticated, as her own. Then to make the thing more

extensive, we will receive, for criticism, any work from a *female* pen ; and, to enliven our sittings, from a female pencil also ; and we will, by a small individual subscription, have it in our power to give premiums, and some pecuniary assistance, if we find it requisite, to indigent merit, or in helping to promote a work, its authoress may not be able herself to publish ; but these sort of people are not necessarily to be admitted of our society. No ! no ! it must be *select* and *exclusive*. Now what think you of my vigilance ? ”

Mrs. Beaumont had lent a patient, but languid, ear, to all this breathless harangue ; and to the question answered, “ I will do any thing *you* wish, to promote any plan of *your*’s ; but I grow tired of *literature*, indeed tired of every thing in this smoky town ; I don’t think it agrees with my health ; I have some thoughts of running away from it directly ; and if not going into Warwickshire, to look after my gardens, or to ruralize, as you would call it, I must get, for a short time, a villa, near Richmond.”

“ My dear creature, I grieve to hear you say this, but surely you will not leave London in the beginning of June, no one ever does ; you must be a greater rustic than I took you for ; but if you only go to Richmond, you will of course keep up your

house here, and can come to town for our meetings, as you will, of course, do for your other numerous engagements."

"Alas! they are not numerous, if they were, perhaps I should not feel these failing nerves, I should not have time to feel them: but I have not *three* cards in the house at this moment."

"Most extraordinary! most wonderful! But my good soul! you forget this is your first year in town, it takes three to make a tolerable acquaintance."

"So I find," returned Mrs. Beaumont, "my poor husband," (an authority she was as little apt to quote, as she was to recollect) "used to say, and it was very truly said, that a country gentleman, if he was not in parliament, told for nothing in London; nobody cared how many acres his estate consisted of, I am sure I feel the truth of this; I only wish he had been persuaded to come in for the Borough of Heathcot, which he was so often solicited to represent; I, his poor widow, might then have had some place in society, and not been the forlorn creature I am."

Miss Talbot burst out into the most violent and irrepressible fit of laughter: "Forgive me! forgive me!" she at last exclaimed, "you, my dear Mrs. Beaumont, blest with such a large share of earthly good, what can you want? You remind me of a

chapter in *Rasselas*, on ‘the wants of him that wants nothing.’”

“ You are much mistaken,” replied Mrs. Beaumont, “ I want that which money cannot buy.”

“ Oh, it can buy *every* thing.”

“ Every thing in Howel and James’s shop, but alas! it will not buy me acquaintance; last night I was, as you saw, at Lady Glenmorris’s, and there was that odious fat Mrs. Ormskirk, going about on Lady Tuberoses’s arm, and giving her cards for a ball right and left, but not one reached me or Emily.”

“ Oh, but you are too impatient; this, as I said before, is your first year, and you have given nothing yourself but a few literary dinners, very charming in themselves, nothing can be more so, but they don’t tell in the going out world like a ball.”

“ But how can I give a ball who do not visit above twenty ball going families? *your* literary people would not look well at a ball.” •

“ Well, if your heart is set on a ball, and I believe you are right, I think I can get you *asked* to Mrs Ormskirk’s, my mother knows Lady Tuberose, and I will get her to write to her for an invitation.”

“ Not for the whole world, I would not have an invitation to a ball at St. James’s by its being *asked* for.”

" My good soul, are you in your senses? or is it that you do not know the world, or rather this vile town? Why, in the days of one's grandmother, people sent an express over the country to ask people to a ball, but things are far different now; if you knew *half* the shabby manœuvres people have now-a-days to *get* asked, and how they *force* themselves into every thing, those pretty glossy ringlets of your's would stand up, each particular hair

' Like quills upon the fretted porcupine.'

There is, I must confess, one place, that no asking will gain admittance to, that is so exclusive, ' I mean B—— house; the D—— has drawn his line, and not even his nearest relation can venture to ask to have it extended."

" His line is a good long one, for it always encircles five hundred persons; but if I was in his place," said Mrs. Beaumont, " I should do as he does, I would not be intruded on."

" You must get rid of some of your country high feeling, my dear, if you wish to get on in this great over-grown town, unless you mean to content yourself with a third or fourth rate set: the *first* belongs exclusively to B—— house and Almack's; by the bye, you ought to have got a subscription for Al-

mack's for you and your niece, that is not so difficult now, people are tired of it, I will get you one for next year, that will help you into a high, but not the exclusive, set."

"Thank you, a thousand times, I hope I may have courage to come to town again."

"Oh, don't talk in that despairing way, you will never give up this beautiful house. But though I hear my poor dear little mare expressing her impatience for her own stable, and her feed, I must say one word more — but promise that you'll forgive what I am going to say—upon honour, you will forgive me."

"Oh, yes," cried Mrs. Beaumont, laughing, "what can it be?"

"Why, my dear creature, the thing most against your getting into the society you wish, is your dear Miss Briggs, with her horrid name, and her atrocious hats; that red one in particular; burn that, or give her another, and leave her at home."

"You ask," cried Mrs. Beaumont, rather startled, "more than I can perform; her hats I can burn, and replace them at Maradan's; but I cannot put her on one side."

"And why not? Taking out your niece is a sufficient excuse; every one knows that two women in a

family are as much as are ever asked, and your undauntable mothers, who will take out *two* girls are hated, and avoided. But Miss Briggs is not your daughter, or your niece ; she is only your humble friend, or dependant. I won't tell you the name she is called by, but I do assure you she is a stumbling stone in your way. Why can't you get Crayon to marry her ? he is a widower, with two small children, and very small earnings ; give her an annuity, and he will be too glad to take her off your hands."

"But I cannot do without her, she is my right hand, and my left, too."

"Why cannot your niece do all she does ; write your notes, cast up your house-keeper's and steward's books ?"

"Simply because she does not know how ; and moreover, because she is going to India with the Autumnal fleet, to her father."

"That is an objection, to be sure, but whilst she does stay, make her useful ; she is in herself ornamental, and may help to get you ball invitations : put her name *only* on your cards ; indulge Miss Briggs in her hats, or any thing else, so long as she will stay at home, or keep to her own *choisi* parties, among *les petites blues* ; there she may be very

acceptable, and, I suppose she carries your charity purse?"

"Yes, and is of most infinite use: you have no idea of the applications I have; look at that pile of letters; they are all begging letters, or applications for subscriptions; not a church in the kingdom is to be built, or a school established, but I am sent to: but my excellent friend understands the business of the poor so well, I leave all to her; and I cannot be ungrateful for all her long attentions to me."

"And has not her *sejour* with you, and the position you have given her by it, had its reward? Don't be so scrupulous; get your set of society, and let her get her's: nothing, nothing else will do, believe me; so think upon it—and *act* upon it—and fare ye well!"

When left alone, Mrs. Beaumont threw herself back in her chair. Took out of her *sachet* a highly perfumed, and richly embroidered handkerchief, and with it wiped away two or three pearly drops from her eyes; and thus soliloquised:

"What an unfortunate creature I am! Under what unlucky planet could I have been born? my destiny seems in every state, wretchedness! As a wife, I was doomed to lead the dullest, and most monotonous of lives! Released from that, what am I? one of the

most affluent, and one of the most unhappy, of widows! Wherever I go, I hear somebody say, that is the rich Mrs. Beaumont! some add a title more gratifying to my vanity—and yet what do these riches bring me, but the distinction of being tormented for charitable contributions, and the power of bying things, I go no where to shew? My health will never stand this vexation; I was happier abroad,—and yet I cannot live abroad, possessing, as I do, all the luxuries and conveniences England affords. Oh! that frightful clause in the will, not that I have the least inclination for a second marriage,—my first was not so happy as to make me wish to have a repetition of it—men will be lords, and masters too!—but it makes me a marked person, and I do believe I am shunned on this account."

How true is the axiom that we are not happy in proportion to what we *have*. Solomon said well, "a contented mind is a continual feast"—a discontented one makes a penance, a fast, of a feast. That Mrs. Beaumont had the power of relieving the wretched,—in itself a pleasure almost divine—and that she liberally used it, is true; but of the *pleasure* she never tasted, she only knew so much, and that a fraction only, of her income, was so devoted, that was all. Whose heart it gladdened she knew not, for she left all

to Miss Briggs, who did the business to the best of her judgment, but without, either to herself, or her principal, those feelings, which are the best and only reward of active benevolence.

Mrs. Beaumont's wretched feelings, as she called them, her disappointed, and unreasonable expectations, as they really were, might have lasted till her niece, and her friend returned—but for the Misses Howard being announced : they were rich single ladies, who made themselves very popular by excellent dinners, and collecting at them, generally, very good company ; their family connexions enabled them to do so ; they had both been beauties in their youth, but, then they were only proud, and not rich ; fortune poured her gifts on them when it was too late for them to be sought as wives, excepting for their *money*, that under both circumstances they had many offers, could not be doubted, but they—perhaps for their own comfort—preferred independence : but they could not forget they had been beauties, they repaired the ravages of time by dress, and all those auxiliaries now so well understood.

During their visit, Mon. Le Fonde, a mutual acquaintance, was announced, and in the course of it, the Duchess de Dindon's *Ambigu*, at her Villa at Chiswick, was talked of.

" You are going ?" said Mon. Le Fonde to Mrs. Beaumont.

" No, I am not acquainted with the Duchesse."

" *Quel dommage !*" he exclaimed, " but nothing so easy as to get an invitation." The Misses Howard seconded this assertion. He could get one, and would with the greatest pleasure, " for Madame Beaumont *et sa belle protégée.*"

" My niece, Miss Emily Shirley," replied Mrs. Beaumont, " I shall be infinitely obliged to you."

Mon. Le Fonde recollected the acceptable- ten sovereigns he had won the night before at *écarté*, indeed that success had induced him to risk the visit, on a very slight Parisian acquaintance ; but Frenchman are never shy and backward when their own interest is concerned, his visit was short, and as the Misses Howard were taking their leave, Mrs. Beaumont exclaimed,

" What lovely bonnets you have on !"

" We have just purchased them of Maradan, by the by, if you want hats, for it must be hats for the Duchesse de Dindon's, you had better go there directly, for she has just got a cargo from Paris for the occasion, and they will all be gone in three days."

" I will order my carriage directly," said Mrs. Beaumont, " suppose you go with us, and let your carriage follow?"

This was agreed to, the hats were superb, Mrs. Beaumont selected *three*, and returned just as Miss Briggs arrived, and her niece had changed her habit; all then went to Kensington Gardens; Mrs. Beaumont was in the gayest spirits, and Miss Briggs could not help saying, as they were going there,

“How glad I am to see you so revived, dearest Mrs. Beaumont, I charged Fletcher to give you some camphor julap, it always does you good, and I rejoice it has not lost its credit to-day.”

“I have had no camphor julap, I assure you, but I have had very agreeable visitors, and that is a better fillip to the spirits.”

Different people joining them, and Count St. Ange riding at the carriage window till they arrived in Stanhope-street, prevented farther private conversation.

When they reached the drawing-room, they found, according to Mrs. Beaumont’s desire, the hats displayed on one of the sopha’s.

“My dear Emily,” said she, “I have got two invitations to rejoice your heart with, at least I am promised them; *one* I consider perfectly certain, and of the other there is not much doubt.”

“What are they? and where are they?” eagerly asked Emily.

“One is to Mrs. Ormskirk’s ball, that is a little,

a very little, doubtful ; the other, which, I am assured, is *certain*, is to the Duchesse de Dindon's *Ambigu* at Chiswick, and it is for that I have got this hat for you ; let me see you try it on, that I may judge if it becomes you."

"Nothing can be better," exclaimed Miss Briggs.

"And now, dear Willy," said Mrs. Beaumont, "I have got this for you"—and a little something came in her throat, but Miss Briggs was lost in admiration, so she ventured, though with that sort of hesitation people feel when they are going to say a thing disagreeable to themselves, and more disagreeable, as they well know, to the person addressed ; but taking up the hat, said,

"I know, dearest, that you are the most disinterested person in the world ; and you are, I know, also aware, that in this ill-natured town more than two women cannot go out together, so I fear I can get no invitation to either of these parties beyond Emily and myself, but as she is to go so soon out of England, I am anxious to shew her every thing—but *your* not going to the Duchesse de Dindon's is no reason that you should not have a pretty hat, especially as that red one is grown rather passed its *premiere jeunesse* ; so I hope you will keep it for our family dinners, at the abbey, and like, and wear this."

It was impossible to resist the kind manner in which this was said, it blunted every edge, and though Miss Briggs *felt* the exclusion, she did not shew that she did.

Mrs. Beaumont particularly requested that the new hat might be worn at dinner, for though they were alone, she wished to see its effect : this was too flattering a request to be refused—however small our pretensions are. “Heaven bless the mark !” we all love to fancy our good, or ill, looks are matter of interest to others.

The hat, when it appeared on, before the dinner was announced, was turned this way, and that way ; Mrs. Beaumont declaring that Miss Howard who had chosen it, had given strict injunctions it should be put a little on one side, just over the left eye ; it was happily arranged before the party sat down to table, and feeling herself in a beautiful new hat, added so much to Miss Briggs’s vivacity, her soup was in danger of getting cold from her eagerness to give an account of the charming party she had been to.

“ Oh ! how I wish, dear Mrs. Beaumont, you had seen Miss Jenkin’s cottage, such a *bijou* ! ”

“ I suppose like the thousands of such cottages in Thistle Grove is it not ? ”

“ By no means, I assure you ; it may look like them on the outside, but it is within side that it has enchanted me, a perfect Swiss cottage.”

“ And within half a mile of Piccadilly, too ; ridiculous ! ”

“ Pardon me, when in it, you might have fancied yourself in Savoy ; all the windows painted with Alpine scenery, done by herself, everything appropriate, and in true keeping, furniture and all. I never saw such chaste imagination—and then the feast of intellect ! Oh, such a splendid poem as Miss L—B—’s, nothing, since Lord Byron, to be compared to it—the booksellers have offered her one thousand guineas for it; her friends recommend her to ask two thousand—such classic imagery—such fancy—it was highly approved, but particularly by those exquisite judges, the Misses Du Burgh.”

“ What, were they there ? ” exclaimed Mrs. Beaumont, “ how long have they been in England ? Now I am sorry I did not go, I should so have liked to meet them again, and talk over all our society at Lucca : where are they in town ? ”

“ Oh, at the old house, in Grosvenor-street ; but you have little chance of meeting them, now you have missed this.”

“ Why so ? ”

“ They are going directly to Paris, or rather to Versailles ; they cannot, they say, live in the foggy atmosphere of England.”

"Alas!" cried Mrs. Beaumont, "that is one of the ill consequences of living long abroad; I should soon have felt that, but my *duty*," with a deep sigh, "brought *me* to England; they are happily unencumbered with large property, that must be looked after."

Miss Briggs laughed at this lamentation, adding, "I dare say the Misses Du Burgh, or rather Mrs. C-
nelia, and Mrs. Agnes, as they now call themselves—"

"Oh, they have taken *brevet* rank, have they?"

"And quite time," replied Miss Briggs, "for I am sure the eldest is turned of seventy. She was a woman, and past her youthhood, when I was a child; but it is wonderful how well they look, and how well they know how to *make* themselves look; they are extraordinary instances of beauty and talent getting people on the world."

"But they have such connexions!" said Mrs
Beaumont.

"Not natural, only acquired, ones," replied Miss Briggs, "but they richly deserve all their renown; but I say, and always shall say, that if they had lived in England, where the people are as fickle as their climate, they would have been in and out of fashion, fifty times: but by living abroad, wintering at Rome, and summering at Sorrento, they have had an opportunity of protecting so many of their countrymen

and women, that when they do come over for a little while, their return is hailed with joy by all their acquaintance."

"Well, I must see them," said Mrs. Beaumont, "I suppose Mrs. Cornelia, as you say I am to call her, is come over to publish a book?"

● "I think, I heard some such surmise."

"Well, and who else had you?"

"You will die with vexation when I tell you. Mrs. Winterton, who has written that wonderful clever book on Geology, and proved that we must have *had three distinct deluges*, and that we bid fair to have a fourth, unless the expected comet interferes and gives us an unparalleled drought for the next four or five years."

"But," said Mrs. Beaumont, "I thought Mrs. Winterton's book was so learned few women could understand it."

"Exactly so, you ought to understand Hydrostatics, Pneumatics, Trigonometry, and Euclid, to be able to enter into her system; but those who can, are struck with its wonders; it opens a new world, or rather worlds, to them."

"Well," replied Mrs. Beaumont, "those who like it may puzzle themselves as they please, but for me, I shall not addle my brains on the subject."

Do you at all know the nature of the book Mrs. Cornelia Du Burgh is going to publish?"

"I believe it is some comparison between the literature of England, and that of other countries; a subject she is fully equal to, but I suspect she has so long lived among foreigners, she will make a partial judge; but, at any rate, a book of her's must be clever and interesting."

"And she always gets the very best society about her," said Miss Briggs. "By the way, she enquired much after her protégée, St. Ange, asked what you had done with him, *et sa belle passion?*"

"You might have told her, *Nothing*," replied Mrs. Beaumont, colouring.

A deep blush at the same time tinged the cheek of her niece, who said, with rather a hesitating voice,

"Is it so very charming living abroad? and, is the Lake de Como so very beautiful?"

"What can you know of the Lake de Como?" said Mrs. Beaumont.

"Only I have heard Count St. Ange talk of his villa, there."

"Oh, I dare say St. Ange knows as well how to embellish his villa in description, as by improvement."

Taking courage, Emily asked "if her aunt had ever been there?"

But a cold, No! put an end to the conversation.

CHAPTER IV.

A FEW days after the party at Mrs. Beaumont's, at which Caroline had been, Miss Shirley said,

“ I have been turning over in my mind, Caroline, what I can do for your amusement. I am going to fulfil a long engagement to my friend, Mrs. Villiars, of staying a few days with her; it will be a dull *séjour* for you, but I know not where I can leave you; would your friends, the Turnbulls, take you for a week ? ”

Caroline feared their house was filled with their own family.

“ I thought of asking your Aunt Beaumont, but London houses have so few bed rooms.”

“ Why can't I go with you, dear aunt ? ”

“ Because it will be so very *triste* for you ; Mrs.

Villiars lives in very little society, and her niece, Miss Neville, is by no means a gay person."

" My dearest aunt, why should you think I cannot live without gaiety? I am never so happy as with you, and I am sure I should find Marchwood quite as gay as I should wish. Do let me go with you, if it does not inconvenience you."

" Not in the least, my love, it was only on your account I thought of any other scheme; but I will tell you, before you finally determine, the sort of people you are likely to be associated with; my friend and school-fellow, Mrs. Villiars, has two children; a son, and daughter, in whom her whole soul is wrapt up: she talks of nothing else; she thinks of nothing else: so you will be sadly bored. Her daughter is married to General Forester, and her son, Captain Villiars, is in the guards: but you will hear of nothing from morning to night but 'dear Augustus, and darling Julia.' "

" That, my dear aunt, I can cheerfully stand, it will rather amuse me."

" Well then, she has a niece—a most excellent quiet person, with great good sense, but of reserved, or rather, of retired manners; you must know her long to find out her worth."

" Does she live with Mrs. Villiars?"

" Not constantly ; her home is her brother's house, at Deepingdale ; but he has not a very amiable wife, and a very large family of children, and therefore, as she is very acceptable to her friends, she is but little at her home. She is a remarkably sensible person, full of information of every kind, but without the smallest pretension to the *blueism* you are so fond of."

" What age is she ; is she young ?"

" No, my dear, *bordering*, if not *entered*, on the old maid list. But if you ingratiate yourself with her, and draw her out, you cannot fail of learning much from her. If it is only the patient, indeed, the cheerful, endurance of not quite agreeable circumstances, it will be a valuable lesson to you."

" May I ask, my dear aunt, what those circumstances are ?"

" Not having a comfortable, happy home. She has none but her brother's house ; his wife is an odious person, and does all she can to make Miss Neville feel that she is not quite independent ; but fortunately, she has many true, and valuable friends, who are always, one or the other of them, not only glad to have her for a guest, but anxious to prevent her ever being with her ungracious sister-in-law : but this want of a comfortable home, depresses her spirits, and rather gives them a tinge of reserve."

"Oh, I dare say, with this *carte du pays*, I shall get on very well with your friends."

On the day appointed, Miss Shirley and her niece were received with great joy by Mrs. Villiars ; she had made great improvements in her house since her friend was there, had so much to shew her, and to talk over, it was difficult to know where to begin, or which to see first ; she had built a hot house and a conservatory, "because dear Julia was so fond of flowers," she could not bear Marchwood unless it was full of sweets ; this was inspected, and pronounced beautiful and perfect by Caroline.

Miss Neville, who was of the party, pointed out two or three particularly rare or beautiful flowers ; next was shewn Captain Villiars's dressing room, that had been lately added to the house ; would we could describe it for the benefit of all our dandy readers ! wardrobes with doors of looking glass turning on hinges, that the person using them might see himself in front, behind, and on one side, at a single glance. All the furniture made of rosewood, and most of it imported from Paris ; a sofa, and canopy of muslin lined with pink silk, and quantities of Sèvre china in every corner, more like a lady's boudoir ; in all this perambulation they were accompanied by a limping fretful terrier, with one leg bound up, and an

old blind spaniel, who was constantly getting under the feet of the party.

When out of doors, they were joined by a romping pointer puppy, who, without any compunction, left the marks of his paws on Miss Shirley's grey pelisse ; Mrs. Villiars made a thousand excuses for the dogs.

"How long," said Miss Shirley, "have you taken a dog fancy?"

"Oh," she replied, "I never liked dogs, nor do I now, but that poor wretched terrier had his leg broke by Augustus's horse treading on him, and I could not refuse his earnest request to have him nursed and cured here, but I believe he is lame for life, and the best thing would have been to have hanged him at once ; that pointer puppy, who, I am so sorry to see, has injured your pretty pelisse, is my son's also, he left him here till Lord Rifle's game-keeper could fetch him to break, but he makes dreadful havoc amongst my chickens, and I dread, between the cook, and the dairy maid, he will come to some untimely end ; as for poor dear blind Azore, she belongs to dear Julia, who is the most absurd person in the world in her love of dogs, and her hatred of any trouble about them ; she *forced* this wretched animal on me. I begged and intreated she would not leave him to die here, but she would not heed me, said she

could not take her to Ireland ; so, my dear, you know the old proverb, ‘ love me, love my dog.’ I am obliged to be tormented with these wretched and unmanageable creatures.”

Unmanageable they were, for nothing could exceed their torment during dinner, excepting the patience and kind attention with which Mrs. Villiars supplied their various wants.

It may be a matter of wonder how so sensible a person as Miss Shirley should be in such strict *liaison* with so weak a woman as Mrs. Villiars ; but there is no accounting for the link of friendship, especially that which is formed in early life, which “ grows with our growth, and strengthens with our strength.” They were at school together, in those days when many female friendships were formed at such places, which do not exist now.

Mrs. Villiars, then Miss Templeton, was so good-natured, and of so sweet and disinterested a temper, no one could help loving her, and the very qualities which made her such a silly, injudicious mother endeared her to her companions ; her total abandonment of *self*, her readiness to give up every thing to make others pleased or happy ; though this attached Miss Shirley to her, it made her tremble for her also ; her strong and sterling sense often checked this

exuberance of feeling, or directed it in its proper course.

It is wonderful how habit and kindness endear opposite characters to each other. When Dr. Johnson was asked what could attach *him* to such a man as Boswell, his answer was, “*kindness, sir;*” and this mutual feeling brought Miss Shirley to her friend at Marchwood.

The evening was passed by the two friends in recollections of early days, or in histories of all Mrs. Villiars’ joys and sorrows about her children. Her daughter had married a very amiable Col. Forester, though her fond mother thought her worthy of a Duke; but her daughter had been used to have her own way, not for the reason that Dandie Dinmont’s wife gave her children their’s because she “had nothing else to give them,” for they commanded every indulgence that an ample jointure could command.

Miss Villiars, in spite of all her mother’s objections and advice, bestowed herself according to her fancy, and her husband, of the two, had far most reason to regret the wilfulness: he was now Major General Forester, inspector of Forts in Great Britain and Ireland; and consequently in a constant course of visiting these various depôts; his wife sometimes accompanied him, that is to say, when she thought

the tour would amuse her, as was the case at the present moment, when her husband visited Ireland, and had fixed the head quarters of his family at Dublin.

The prominent traits in this Lady's character will develope themselves when it suits us to bring her before our readers. Her brother, as little used to early control as herself, was as unwilling to submit to it. His mother of all things wished him *not* to go into the army, but into the guards he *would* go, and she could only lament the choice of poor dear—*obstinate*, she should have added—Augustus—and ardently pray there might never be a war in his time. But there are plenty of dangers in life, for a headstrong, self-willed young man, without those necessarily attendant on war.

The morning after Miss Shirley and her niece's arrival at Marchwood, during breakfast, as Mrs. Villiars was busily occupied in giving blind Azore her breakfast, which she was, as a common occurence, spilling over her mistress's gown, Miss Neville took up, the just brought in newspaper: as she was looking over it, Miss Shirley observed her change colour, and say to Caroline, "Don't mind me," she darted out of the room taking the paper with her. At that instant Azore, in her impatience, overturned

her saucer of milk into her kind mistress's lap, who eagerly called for her niece's assistance, but she had gone into the library, whither Miss Shirley had followed her.

" My dear Caroline, a thousand pardons, but do ring the bell for my maid ; many thanks, where on earth can Fanny Neville be ? "

Miss Shirley on following hr, had gently and kindly asked if any thing in the paper had distressed her, seeing her extreme agitation ?

" Oh look there," she replied, pointing to the following paragraph :

STEEPLE CHASE EXTRAORDINARY.

This long expected meeting, on which such large sums of money were depending, and which has been so difficult of arrangement, took place yesterday, the following gentlemen were the competitors : Mr. Singleton, on his brown horse *Blucher*, Mr. Villiars on his roan mare *Constance* ; Mr. Phillimore on his grey *Peggy* ; and Mr. Talmash on his chesnut horse *Eclipse*. The chase proceeded pretty equally for a long time, when Mr. Villiars's *Constance* pushed on at so great a rate no doubt was entertained of her winning, and seven to one was betted on her,—but it is with great pain we announce that, taking a desperate leap,

her strength failed, she fell, her master under her, and as she for a few seconds continued rolling over him, he is, it is feared dreadfully hurt; he was not dead when taken up, but was conveyed senseless on a hurdle to a neighbouring farm-house: the messenger who was dispatched for the Regimental surgeon of the first Guards, brought us the intelligence!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Miss Neville, "what is to be done, this paragraph would kill my aunt, how shall we keep it from her?"

"I fear, sooner or later, she must know it," said Miss Shirley—"but not all at once."

"She always looks over the papers,—she is so eager for news from Dublin—we had better cut out this paragraph from the paper: let us see what is on the other side—oh, an advertisement for French polish for tables—that will do, I will venture," and, having executed her intention, both returned to the breakfast table.

"My dear Fanny, what could made you run away just at the moment I wanted your assistance? Watkins was so long coming, my gown is spoilt, you would have done it in a moment, what could make you run away?"

"I went for my scissars."

"Your scissars! and my good Miss Shirley?"

“ She came to fetch me.”

“ Well, you wanted your scissars at a most unlucky moment. I wonder such a tidy person as you are, do not carry a pair in your bag : but I see you have been using them on my newspaper, dear me! what could you want to cut out in such a hurry ?”

“ Only an advertisement : I have so often lost such things by neglecting to take them out when I first saw them, they are never to be found again.”

“ There was nothing material on the other side ?”

Miss Neville, aware of this question, before it was completed, jumped up, and took Azore off a chair from which she would have made her way on to the breakfast table ; this entirely diverted her aunt’s attention to her question, who rather peevishly said,

“ Oh, do not torment poor old Azore, let her do as she likes, we shall all want to do so. when we are as old and feeble.”

The breakfast past off, and Mrs. Villiars went to look after her garden and other pets. Miss Shirley and Miss Neville took Caroline into their consultation as to what measures they should take in breaking this intelligence to Mrs. Villiars, when the former suggested it, as advisable, to wait for better authority than a newspaper, which often gives a paragraph one day, for the sake of contradicting it the next, before

they ventured to distress poor Mrs. Villiars's maternal feelings."

Their deliberations were hardly over when the butler introduced Col. Wetheral, saying,

"I will let my mistress know you are here, Sir."

The truth flashed on Miss Shirley's mind, and she said,

"Williamson, you had better allow this gentleman to wait till your mistress comes in."

Looking to Col. Wetheral for his assent he bowed, and Miss Shirley said,

"Though I have not the honour of knowing Col. Wetheral, I am afraid, I can too well guess his errand; a paragraph in the Herald this morning has greatly alarmed us, we have kept it from Mrs. Villiars, but I fear your visit is to confirm its truth."

"I am glad," said Colonel Wetheral, "you are prepared for the sad tidings I bring: may I ask to see the paper? that part cut out was shewn to him, and with a deep sigh he said, it is even so! poor Villiars!"

"He is not dead?" said Miss Neville.

"He was not when I left him at seven this morning, but he is in a most distressing, and I fear, hopeless state!"

"Is it broken bones, or fractured scull?"

"I do not exactly know that it is either," he re-

plied, “our surgeon could not pronounce if it was a fracture, or only a concussion of the brain, he is perfectly insensible, but no bones are broken.”

“Is his situation considered one of great danger?” said Miss Neville.

“I believe the greatest possible, there is but one shadow of hope, *youth*; and I have seen such wonderful recoveries, with the aid of that, I cannot give him up; but I presume this is Mrs. Villiars, I see coming towards the house: you, ladies, must instruct me how to act, in breaking this mournful news to her.”

“We will assist you, and open the sad business,” said Miss Shirley; and as Mrs. Villiars entered the room, she said, “Colonel Wetheral, a friend of your son’s!”

“Any friend of my son’s is welcome to me,” was the reply, “but why did not Augustus come himself and present you to me?”

“He would have done so, madam, but he is not quite well, and he wished me to inform you, so that you might not expect to see him.”

“Not quite well!” repeated Mrs. Villiars, “how very odd he should give you, sir, the trouble of coming to tell me!”

“He feared you might hear it accidentally, and be alarmed.”

"Dear creature! was he so thoughtful? he is not always so, but I trust he is growing tamer, and more sensible of his mother's affection: but I do him injustice, he was always sensible of it; but young men, very young men, I mean, are apt to be afraid of being laughed at for shewing the affection they *feel* for their mothers: but do, Colonel Wetheral, tell me what is the matter with dear Augustus?"

"He has had a fall from his horse, madam."

"Poor, poor dear! not much hurt, I hope?"

"I fear to say a good deal."

"Oh, my God! How! how! did it happen? One of his wild goose chases!"

"It was a steeple chase."

"Pardon me, sir, what can you mean, is my poor dear boy out of his wits?"

"It is a too common and dangerous amusement, riding to a given point over everything."

"Oh! but what has happened to him?"

"He has been thrown from his horse," repeated Colonel Wetheral, "and a good deal hurt."

"O God! O God! where is he?"

"At a farm house, near where the accident happened."

Mrs. Villiars did not seem to be at all aware of the extent of the accident, or to be easily convinced of it.

Some people fancy those *they* love bear “about a *charmed life*;” but, notwithstanding, she got up hastily rang the bell, which was instantly answered, for Colonel Wetheral’s groom had communicated his master’s errand, and the whole house were informed of it before its mistress.

“Order the carriage directly,” said Mrs. Villiars, “and send Philip on for a pair of horses, to be added to mine at St. Alban’s.”

Colonel Wetheral got up, and taking both her hands, said,

“Allow me, madam, earnestly to intreat you will defer your visit to your son, till he is better able to bear it; it would do him harm now.”

“Harm!” exclaimed Mrs. Villiars, “you cannot know, sir, what a mother’s affection is; perhaps you never knew the solace of one: who can be half so careful, half so tender, of my son, as *I* shall be! No! no! I cannot allow myself to be prevented from my duty, and my greatest pleasure, administering to the comfort of my beloved child.”

“I do not doubt, madam, your tender anxiety, but, in the present instance, profound *quiet* is the thing most necessary in his case.”

“Oh, sir, replied Mrs. Villiars, no nurse can be so quiet as his mother, or so deeply interested.”

" Of that, Madam, I can have no doubt ; but the slightest agitation, to your son, might be in the greatest possible degree injurious.

" But, sir, I would watch by his bed, and not let him see me."

" The sound of your voice, Ma'am, might agitate him, if indeed he was sensible of it."

" Oh ! oh ! gracious God," exclaimed Mrs. Villiars, " is such his state—my poor, lovely, darling, boy!" And she fell back on her chair in a violent hysterick : her neice and Miss Shirley went to her, and, after a few minutes, led her to the door. The latter as she passed Colonel Wetheral, begged he would stay till her return.

Leaving poor afflicted Mrs. Villiars to the care of her neice and maid, she returned to Colonel Wetheral to enquire what he recommended to be done towards Mr. Villiars ?

" He cannot be moved at present," he said, " he has with him our regimental surgeon, and he, or his assistant, will not leave him. I fear I must be on duty this evening. If I can get off, I shall go down to poor Villiars, if not, one of his brother officers will take my place ; he is greatly beloved by us, for his good nature and kind heartedness, and now I have had the honour of seeing his mother, I can account for

many of his faults, which have been the consequence of her, perhaps, injudicious fondness."

" You are quite right, sir," said Miss Shirley, " my afflicted friend was left a young widow, and her only consolation was excessive indulgence and almost idolatory of her children ; her son had a long minority, and, when he came of age, he wished his mother to continue at Elstree Park, and let him be her occasional guest ; but she fancied he would enjoy himself more, without the restraint of an old woman ; but I believe now, she may have too much reason to regret this arrangement ; for I understand, he only keeps up a few rooms for himself, and his friends, as a hunting and a shooting place ; and I should suspect, it is from some of the orgies kept there that this unfortunate accident has resulted."

" You are too near the truth, Madam," replied Col. Wetheral ; and, rising to take his leave, added " If I can get out of town by the mail to night, I must return to-morrow morning ; I will order my horses to meet me at St. Alban's, and have the honour of making my report to you about this time to-morrow : if you don't see me, be not alarmed ; but depend upon having the earliest intelligence I can communicate : but I must impress on your mind the great danger of

Mr. Villiars's situation; and the little hopes I dare entertain of his recovery; a naturally good constitution, though one sadly tried by imprudence, and a peculiarly good temper, are the best foundation of any hope."

Mrs. Villiars's grief had all that uncontrollable emotion, that persons used to give way to every impulse indulge in: one of her first desires was that her dear Julia should be written to—but as she was in Dublin, and her letters of course at the mercy of the winds, Miss Shirley suggested the good sense of waiting a day or two for more favourable intelligence.

Mrs. Villiars caught at the idea of more a favorable report, and, by degrees, in the course of the evening, though she suffered much from her paroxysms of grief, she clung to hope, notwithstanding she was made fully sensible of the dangerous situation of her son; but there are some buoyant natures that "hope where hope is lost," if those they love are concerned, and who may be said to *believe* on all occasions as they *wish*.

Nothing is so vain and useless as reasoning with those who are only accustomed to *feel*—who fancy they do right, by giving way to feelings in themselves amiable and natural, but wrong only in their *excess*:

it is easier to remove mountains than to convince such persons that they are guilty of excesses, that become sinful, merely from their violence: there cannot exist a more lovely virtue than parental affection, but when the affection spends itself in the most pernicious indulgence of the beloved object, it becomes sinful, and leads to irremediable evils—this is the case in many other virtues, the want of temperance in them turns them to vices, and therefore the adage that extremes meet, and the extremity of virtue may be the first step in vice. There is no precept more strongly recommended than bringing our minds into subjection; and, “moderation in all things” is a sacred injunction.

Whilst Mrs. Villiars considered her immoderate, her intemperate, grief for her son’s accident as a proof of the strength of her maternal affection, in vain was every reason presented to her mind, by her kind and judicious friend Miss Shirley, to induce her to submit to His will by whom all things are governed. They were not listened to; she was in her own estimation the kindest of mothers, and her son the most lovely—most amiable—most estimable—of human beings: but what reason will not do, time may; and we must leave Mrs. Villiars to weep herself into a more rational mood.

CHAPTER V.

MISS TALBOT found no great difficulty in getting tickets from Mrs. Ormskirk, for a person of Mrs. Beaumont's consideration in the eyes of the wife of a successful silk manufacturer, for such was the lady, who was meditating, we ought rather to say—preparing—for a splendid ball, and Miss Emily Shirley, was of course included.

Mon. Le Fonde was also true to his promise, and presented the following morning a blazing ticket for the Duchesse de Dindon's *ambigu*.

It is in our recollection, when the tickets for benefit concerts were designed by Cipriani and Bartollozi, and we have not very long since seen their classic designs collected in a fifty years' old scrap book, and well they deserved preserving. Those of the

Duchesse de Dindon were printed in gold, and designed by herself: a landscape taken from the grounds, of her villa at Chiswick, with the Thames in front, covered with innumerable boats, formed the ticket; on each side of an immense card was the figure of a waterman with an upright oar in one hand, in the other holding a *drapeau*, the two *drapeaux* crossed in the middle, and on one was, La Duchesse de Dindon, and on the other, the name of the party invited; at a corner of one drapeau was the *fleur de lis* of France; and, occupying the same place in the other, was the Irish harp, to shew the Duchesse claimed affinity with each country; at the bottom was put “Eight o’clock, the company are requested to come by water, and return in carriages, to be ordered at twelve o’clock—no dancing.”

“ Well,” said Mrs. Beaumont, “ this is altogether the drollest invitation I ever saw: but there is much taste and originality in it, and I like it for those circumstances; but, M. Le Fonde, tell us what it is to be ?”

“ Oh, a *fête champêtre*, a thing, what you call your Vauxhall.”

“ Charming,” replied Mrs. Beaumont, “ I suppose our boats must be very gay?”

“ Oh, yes, à la Cleopatre.”

"Will you be one of our attendants?" asked Mrs. Beaumont.

"With the greatest pleasure."

Poor Mrs. Ormskirk's ball, upon which so much thought and money was expended, sunk to nothing before the expectation of this *ambigu*, the very name carried it before the wind :—but it came, it was over, and, like most balls of the same description, left little remembrance behind, excepting that Mrs. Beaumont had there been introduced to some new acquaintance. She would have liked to dance, she might have done so in the country, but such things were not tolerated in London ; but she saw her niece dance, and beautifully, with Count St. Ange, who was gradually reinstating himself in her favour ; she offered him a place in her boat to Chiswick, and to Miss Talbot also, whether as a *foil*, or as a *chaprone*, we know not.

Mrs. Beaumont had a boat decorated on purpose for her, its awning and curtains were *rose* colour silk, the watermen were in green, with the Beaumont arms on their badges, and at the stern was displayed a white silk flag with the same arms, surrounded with appropriate devices, Cupids, Loves, and Graces.

To be sure it was a great bore to be obliged to

dine at six, and set out directly afterwards ; “ why could not La Duchesse have had a *dejeuné*? that was at a much more convenient hour, but foreigners like early dinners, it is not with them a *social* meal, as with us.”

The capricious skies in this country are not always favourable to *al-fresco* parties, indeed they are generally most particularly adverse to such amusements as the present, but this day had been one of the finest the month of June ever produced ; of course the tide had been consulted, and the voyage was as delicious as weather and society could make it. The party in which we take particular interest landed on the lawn of the Duchesse’s villa just as a brilliant, that is to say, *as* brilliant—a sun set as this climate ever affords, was shedding its golden streaks on the bosom of old father Thames.

“ How enchanting !” exclaimed Emily, “ can any thing be more lovely than this ?”

“ Oh,” replied Miss Talbot, “ you will think this poor, tame, and dull, when you have seen your Indian sunsets.”

“ Or,” said the Count, “ if you saw those on Lago di Como, they would enchant such an enthusiastic mind as your’s ”

“ Pray, Count,” said Mrs. Beaumont “ don’t put

it into Emily's head ; she has no enthusiasm about her, she is as good a dull little soul as lives."

Emily felt this, and coloured, the Count did the same, they exchanged looks : his, which said, " Is this jealousy ?" had no inconsiderable share of vanity and exultation mixed with it.

The ceremony, or rather the difficulty, of landing took up some time, there was such a crowd of boats, La Duchesse received her guests in a bower of roses, or rather choice exotics, for roses are obsolete and plebeian now, they are to be had all the year, even in frost and snow, by any cottager ; they have lost all the images with which they were once associated.

The first part of the amusement consisted in exploring the gardens, viewing all its deceptions, all the admirable contrivances to hide boundaries, and make what was really *little*, look *large* : much too, of a temporary nature, had been done by an artist from Vauxhall. ●

The English are certainly not a dancing nation, they have none of that refined hilarity amongst the peasantry that can spend itself in a jig, or a sara-band ; but the higher class fancy that *they* love dancing, and, where there is a party of twenty, if it furnishes four young men and as many young

ladies, they think they are compelled to dance, that is to say, expose themselves in a waltz, which at best, they make any but a graceful dance of; the natural *pudeur* of the English women make many of them feel, when waltzing, as if they were committing sin; they avert their looks from their partners, and get their dress deranged by his necessary endeavours to keep them more within his arms, and in the possibility of dragging them round; when two or three rounds are over, there is generally a state of confusion that beggars description, one unfortunate couple, probably the smallest in the set, is hurried on, thrown down, and the more powerful ones dance, or trample, over the fallen. Nor are we more successful in the gallopade, there the violence of the exercise heightens the most delicate complexion to a vulgar coarseness, and when the couple stop, the panting of each party resembles that of race horses at the end of a heat. Is this feminine? Is this lady like? But it ends not here. Then comes the Mazurka, certainly a dance fit for peasants in wooden shoes; where, from the awkwardness of Englishmen, who are not born Vestris, or Le Piques, the ten breadth gowns of the ladies twirl round their partners till it is only the size of the foot that tells which is of the masculine or the feminine

gender. We expect very soon to see the tarantala introduced.

We remember when things were differently ordered, and if the word of those who are old, may on such occasions be taken, we venture to give the preference to the dances of our own youth: the Minuet, and the Louvre, were solemn dances, meant for shew, and to display a fine form and graceful motion: these were followed by country dances, or, as they were originally called, *contra* dances, from the partners standing opposite. The long time it took a single couple to thread through the mazes of hands across, pouset, &c., gave ample time for conversation; or, as it would now be called, *flirting*, between the unemployed couples, and many happy results followed; especially when the same persons danced a whole evening together, and had been engaged to do so for a week before hand. How unlike the solemn quadrille, where ladies and gentlemen equally look as if they were doing penance, or were afraid of a dancing master's rap, from the bow of his kit if they missed a step. Oh, commend us to the distressed look of the *cavalier seul* when the master of the band says *En avant!* But, to return to our party: though they occasionally joined different parties, yet, M Le Fronde, as having procured the invita-

tion, considered himself, as Mrs. Beaumont's cavalier for the night ; and Count St. Ange appeared perfectly happy with Emily : they were often, from necessity, a few paces behind ; the path, just then, happened to be narrow, or crowded ; but, on those occasions, so vigilant a chaprone was Mrs. Beaumont, her eyes were turned round in a moment, to see where her niece was. Admirable caution certainly, towards so young a person ! and in so large a company ! But, whether Miss Talbot saw its real cause, and ridiculed it, or was annoyed by the repeated “Emily, don't keep so far behind me,” she at last said,

“Never mind, Emily, she won't loose sight of us for her own sake ; and Count St. Ange is with her to protect her.”

Mrs. Beaumont's colour might, from its height, have been “celestial rosy red ;” but it had a touch of the fictitious that took off from its beauty.

How often does it happen that what we enjoy most in anticipation gives us the least pleasure in reality : there is often a poison drop in our choicest pleasures, dropped we know not how, into the draught, but it converts it all into bitter. This bitterness generally owes its gall to mortified vanity !

If it were possible, by any weight or measure, to

ascertain the quantum of *envy*, *malice*, *hatred*, and *jealousy*, contained in one crowded ball room, the result would be terrific! Girls envy other girls their good looks—their partners: Mothers hate one another for producing a handsomer daughter, and if opportunity offers, indulge their *malice* by depreciating the fair object of their *jealousy*. So goes the world! *that* world which so many strive, by every unworthy art, to become a part of! to be considered as belonging to! what does it give them in return for the slavery it imposes? what is the satisfaction derived by any one from *an* entertainment they have given, on which all the luxuries of the earth have been lavished? It perhaps forms a flaming paragraph in the *Morning Post*, put in probably at the expense of the mistress of the fête, but if she limits the expense of the insertion to *one* paper, another abuses the thing, for the sake of filling up an odd bit of a column, and poor Mrs. Ormskirk, or Mrs. Any-body-else, bites her lip with vexation; and such is the amiable temper of the public press, at the present time, or perhaps, rather the anti-aristocratic spirit those journals wish to gratify, that *an* ill-natured paragraph gets into by far the most widely dispersed country papers.

But what was Mrs. Beaumont's position with

Count St. Ange? was he her lover? oh no, impossible! he was many years her junior: besides, it must be a hopeless passion as it regarded her—that fatal, fatal clause! and though he talked of his estates and his villa, on the Lago di Como, she had a strong suspicion he was only a younger son. And could she leave all her ‘vines and her fig-trees,’ for such an uncertainty? but his attentions—his devotion was charming; much too refined for such a child as Emly, it was only spoiling her; giving her a taste for what she could never meet with in India, where marriages were only those of *convenience*; he could, she was certain, never have the bad taste to prefer a school girl to a person of her finished mind and manners. Perhaps she had been to blame; she showed too much displeasure at his little inadvertence in introducing those horrors to her party; she must—she would relent, and smile upon him; but the opportunity offered not during the evening; and we have been guilty of anticipation, in giving the lady’s thoughts on her pillow, before relating some of the circumstances that gave rise to the jealousy by which they were dictated.

The amusements at Chiswick consisted, first, in a ramble through the grounds, as we have already specified; then the company assembled in the house,

where there was the choicest music, both vocal and instrumental ; all the first professors, and the most celebrated singers ; during this the gardens were illuminated by myriads of fantastic lights, and fireworks were displayed on the water ; it was a scene of enchantment, calculated to fit the heart for tender impressions ; but Mrs. Beaumont, and Miss Talbot, were doomed to listen to the long dull *tirades* of Mon. Le Fronde, who, in his own opinion, was *un bon raconteur*, in that of every other person, a *dull, prosing bore* ; but Emily was amused, the Count exerted himself to the utmost, and often with a shrug and sly look toward M. Le Fronde, testified his satisfaction at the change fortune had on that occasion allotted him.

When the three ladies were seated in Mrs. Beaumont's carriage, Miss Talbot said,

"I think, Emily, you must have had a delightful evening, and you seemed fully to enjoy it."

"Giddy things of her age," replied Mrs. Beaumont, "are easily pleased, or I am sure Emily could not have been so to night, for, to my mind, it was as dull a thing as I ever wish to partake of."

Emily declared herself *charmed* with the whole thing; she only wished dancing had been added to make it complete.

"Light minds are pleased with trifles," observed Mrs. Beaumont, "when you are older, you will judge more accurately of persons and things."

"I wish I was never to grow older," replied Emily, "if age is to take off my zest of such enjoyments as fall in my way; I don't mean real downright old age, that I know stops all enjoyment, but, I mean growing a little older and a little wiser."

"A little wiser you had need grow," said Mrs. Beaumont rather peevishly, which put an end to the conversation till the party set Miss Talbot down in Park Lane, and proceeded to Stanhope-street.

The following morning Mrs. Beaumont was obliged to devote to her man-of-business, he brought her leases to sign, and various other matters of business that belong to large landed property to inspect; she was sufficiently clear headed and alive to her own interest as generally to understand, and to the necessary degree, attend to such details.

It is impossible to *get away* from such occupation; your men-of-business are the most determined people in the world, they push lease after lease, deed after deed, under the hand of their unhappy and wearied client.

At last all was finished! Mrs. Beaumont would allow no time for complaints, or for requests, they must

be forwarded singly to her; the truth was, that she was not so fatigued with business—but—that she heard music and singing over her head, and knew there were two voices ; on entering the drawing-room she found Count St. Ange singing with Emily, Miss Briggs writing in the second room. The moment she entered the duet stopped, and something, on her part, checked the readiness with which she was preparing to give her hand to the Count.

“ Don’t let me break in on your practise,” she said, in a voice of pique rather than encouragement ; “ you seem to have been very happily engaged for some time, as my ears have told me, for I was in the library under you.”

When a little put out of the way, women have generally most tact, not even excepting a *Frenchman*.

“ My dear aunt ! ” said Emily, “ the Count and I are practising a little duet, which we feel sure you will like, but we do not wish to exhibit it till we are perfect.”

“ What is it ? ” said Mrs. Beaumont, “ do I know it ? ” and, taking her glass, she approached the music desk, where she saw, and as she saw, a blush of pleasure rose on her cheek —

“ Oh dolci inganno, et amorosa froda.”

“Where in the world?” exclaimed she, “did you get that? and who has set it to music?”

“Those sins,” replied Emily, “the Count must answer for, *I* have been only so far a partaker in the theft, that I have been learning to sing it now it is set.”

Mrs. Beaumont *tried* to complain of treachery, and called on Miss Briggs to answer the charge; she only said “she never gave it away.”

“How abominable it is!” said Mrs. Beaumont, “that people will search one’s albums! (as if albums were intended for any other earthly purpose.) “I think I must punish you, Count, and banish you from my august presence for a week.”

“Oh! be not so cruel! you will hear of me at the end of it, suspended from my bed-post.”

In short, the vanity of the lady was gratified, and the Count felt he was *almost* restored to his original favour—he felt not quite—his own conscience told him he was delinquent—that Mrs. Beaumont was not, as heretofore, his object—but he must disguise that little circumstance as well as he could, and keep his situation as a welcome visitor.

What has our beloved friend Miss Briggs been about lately? she is not a person to rest on her oars. Life will not stagnate with her. We last left her,

somewhat appeased by a beautiful hat for not being invited to Mrs. Ormskirk's ball, or the Duchesse de Dindon's *ambigu*, a hat which she wore on the same night it was given her to the Opera. As the box was filled with gentlemen, and the Count amongst them, Miss Briggs prevailed on Emily to let her go in front during a rather dull dance; as there was the Count in the back ground, this was not difficult of arragement. Who knows the execution a beautiful hat, fresh from Paris, and imported by Maradan, may do! It, and its wearer were not unobserved, for they attracted the attention of a gentleman Miss Briggs had met at Rome, with whom she had been on a party to the Colliseum by moon light, and other lions. This was no other than Mr. Van Tulip, a Dutch merchant, who had acquired a very large fortune, more by speculating in loans, than by dealing in flower roots.

The Dutch, dull as they may be thought, have always been patrons of the fine arts. Rembrandt's friends were most of them mercantile people, his Clement de Jonge, and his Gold Weigher. The choicest pictures of Rubens are to be found in the collections of Antwerp merchants. But, having acquired a fortune, some demon whispered, "Van Tulip," or Van Tu, as his friends called him, "have

a taste ;" he went to Rome, to Naples, to Venice, at several of which places Miss Briggs encountered him. He bought at unheard of prices, *statues, pictures, mosaics, and cameos*, and had now, finally, taken a house in the Regent's Park, to deposit, and to shew off his treasures. What a *treasure* he was in himself! rich! a widower! and only two small children, a girl and a boy; really a lady of a certain, or rather *uncertain age*, like our amiable Briggs, must have been more than mortal to resist such a combination. How very, *very* fortunate it was, that *she* should go to the Opera on that particular night; and how doubly so that she should have on *that* very beautiful becoming hat. This singular piece of good fortune completely reconciled her to not being invited to Mrs. Orinskirk's ball, and the Duchesse de Dindon's *ambigu*; they might have done nothing for her!

She was seen, hat and all, from the pit, and the
Van himself speedily made his way to Mrs. Beaumont's box; he paid his respects to *her*, as its mistress, and asked permission to wait on her, which was readily granted; but it was Miss Briggs he was eager to seek, she had been his principal acquaintance abroad, Mrs. Beaumont had merely tolerated and laughed at him.

Miss Briggs returned home in the highest possible spirits, and Mrs. Beaumont, who had greatly dreaded her resentment, at being no longer considered as her *attachée*, was equally pleased to see her friend take a different course to her's, and her niece's.

When they arrived at home, Miss Briggs reiter-
ated her good fortune in meeting Mr. Van Tulip,
and hoped Mrs. Beaumont would be at home to him
when he called.

"Oh! by all means have him let in; if I am en-
gaged, you can entertain him Willy, and catch him,
if you can, for he is a prize, I assure you."

"One above me," replied Miss Briggs, with a
sigh, a smile, and a blush. But she did not think
so.

Could we, knowing her as we do, expect she
should? Oh, what enchanting dreams visited her
pillow that night, no night-mare! They were bright
and rich, to be mistress of a house in the Regent's
Park, decorated with choice things from *Rome*,
Naples, and *Florence*. Oh, it was too much to be
possible! but it was worth the attempt, and the plan
was laid for the heart and the fortune of poor Van
Tulip. His first wife had been a very lovely crea-
ture, but quite a child compared to her husband.

Persons who have their own fortune carve to out, often either *make* them, or *mar* them, by a very early marriage, or a very late one; the first producing an embarrassment seldom retrieved, and the other often takes place when the zest for conjugal happiness is over, but it may bring content and tranquillity, and perhaps that is as much as falls to the lot of nine-tenths of mankind, or womankind either.

Though Miss Briggs saw the policy of concealing her chagrin at being put *hors de combat*, yet Mrs. Beaumont could not help perceiving an incipient jealousy towards Emily, who she considered the obstacle in her way with Mrs. Beaumont; there she was wrong:—by *her* means, her protectoress would never have got into society, at least into any but the literary set, as she called them.

Mrs. Beaumont had taken Emily between her leaving school and going to India as an act of pure good nature, she was her god-daughter, though she had insisted on her *not* being named *Fanny*; one Fanny Shirley in a century was quite enough; she was the second, and a third would ruin the brilliancy of the thing completely. As yet, Mrs. Beaumont had no reason to regret her kindness to her niece, who, it must in justice be owned, was “the most un-

offending soul alive ;" the only characteristic she possessed was good nature, and a disposition always to be pleased ; those sort of persons of any age are the most difficult to treat ill or unkindly, they give you no *pretence* for doing so.

That Mrs. Beaumont would have thought such a visitor as Van Tulip in England, and more especially in London, in the height of its season, the greatest of possible bores, there is no doubt ; but in delicate cases, where a little manœuvring is necessary, many inexplicable things are submitted to. Keeping Miss Briggs in good humour, keeping her occupied, whilst, by other channels, Mrs. Beaumont made her niece useful in getting herself into society, was the great point ; the excuse of having a young girl to take out pleads against many bold pushes, and as Emily was so soon going to India, there was additional reason for leaving no stone unturned.

When alone, she fell into fits of laughter at the idea of the Van and the Briggs putting up together ; but yet it sometimes came across her, what should she do without her humble, useful friend ? but we all like change, and Mrs. Beaumont *might*, we do not know that she *did*, anticipate keeping her niece longer in England.

The morning after the Opera, Mr. Van Tulip was

announced, Miss Briggs was out, so it was only a visit of ceremony, and to extract a promise from Mrs. Beaumont to take an early opportunity "of giving her judgment," as he called it, on his new house, and her opinion on his pictures.

" You will find Miss Briggs a much better judge," was the reply, " I know but little about pictures and statues critically, but she does; Italian literature rather attracted my attention."

Mr. Van Tulip had brought quantities of books, some rare ones, from Italy, and he hoped both ladies would come and look them over.

Miss Briggs was in despair at her return to find *who* had been there, but was consoled by Mrs. Beaumont telling her she had promised to take her the following Wednesday to the Regent's Park.

Old maids, and our Briggs was verging towards that sisterhood, though perhaps the utmost she would allow herself to be, was *une très peu passée*; such ladies are, however, proverbially fond of *pink* ribbon, but she was too well aware of the stigma to incur it; besides, she had naturally a very high colour; she deliberated a good deal on the colour of a bonnet for this important visit, and at last said,

" Dear Mrs. Beaumont, if you are going shopping, I do so want a bonnet, I think I could get one at the Western Exchange."

Mrs. Beaumont's purse was always most readily opened for her friend.

"Oh, don't think of going to that ordinary place, I will take you to Maradan's, or Mademoiselle Payne's, and I hope you will allow me to choose for you."

When at these places, many were tried on and rejected ; it was evident Miss Briggs' taste led her to primrose colour, but that was rather too juvenile, and besides, required a fine complexion.

Count St. Ange, who was of the party, pronounced a death warrant on one that was certainly looked at with a longing eye, by saying,

"That would suit you, Mademoiselle Emily, no complexion but your's, or any other age, can wear that."

But Mrs. Beaumont, though liberal to her niece, was not disposed to gratify the Count's taste in this instance. When the purchase was made, Miss Briggs said,

"Pray send it to Mrs. Beaumont's, Stanhope Street."

"Why, my dear creature, should you not put it on, and send that old thing home ; oh, there now ! you really look ten years younger : the Count dare not deny that *paradise* becomes you, if the primrose did not." •

The count confirmed this, and the party drove to the Regent's Park, they were received by the owner of the mansion in the hall ; he took Mrs. Beaumont under his arm, and begged the Count to take care of the other ladies : but he was satisfied by devoting himself to Emily, and Miss Briggs was ready, on all occasions, to join Mrs. Beaumont.

In the bow window of the principal drawing room was placed one of Canova's dancing figures, as large as life, and on the panels between the windows, and on the sides of the bow, were mirrors, so that the figure was reflected, and multiplied almost to a startling degree ; and in the corners of the room smaller models of his Sleeping Nymph and Psyche, both which their host assured them were the original designs of the artist.

We shall not give a catalogue of the pictures, though some of them were, really, gems of great beauty. Miss Briggs was quite at home, talked of Guidos, Madonnas, and Titian's Flora, and La Marta, and all the rest of the gabble of art, that people who know nothing really of pictures, may easily pick up in Italy, from catalogues, or a *valet de place*. Of course, she was in rapturous admiration of every thing, and Mrs. Beaumont longed to "give a significant look at Emily and the Count; to say "how

well we get on ;" but she restrained herself; first, because she had not yet taken them into her confidence on the subject; and she was also checked, by seeing how well they seemed to understand each other, and how happy they were. It would have been impossible, under any circumstances, for the Count to have been *her* attendant on the present occasion, and yet that little green-eyed monster, *jealousy*, would not allow her to be pleased at his attentions being otherwise disposed of.

On a table in one of the rooms laid some books and work, evidently belonging to Mr. Van Tulip's little girl. Miss Briggs asked most tenderly after her, and hoped they should see her. She was sent for, and Miss Briggs lavished the most enthusiastic fondness on her, called her a dear little angel, and, in a low voice, told Mr. Van Tulip she never saw so beautiful a countenance.

Parental love is easily gratified, but on this occasion the gratification was merited—the child was like her mother, and might have been painted for a cherub.

A collation, for luncheon was over, finished the visit; choicest fruit, rarest wines were produced, and we must do Mrs. Beaumont the justice to say, she pushed her friend Miss Briggs, and her judgment in

pictures and statues, and her taste in wine, off to the best advantage.

It is one of the great mortifications those who have fine collections of pictures experience, to find so few who really can appreciate them; all admire, and exclaim, Fine! wonderful! charming! but if they extend the praise, it is nine times in ten on the wrong pictures, or the least admirable part of an acknowledged fine one.

Miss Briggs had picked up abroad much of the verbiage of criticism; and Mr. Van Tulip was not himself so very accurate a judge as to detect her errors, and she had, some how or other, talked herself into the reputation of being a *remarkably clever woman*.

When they returned home, Mrs. Beaumont congratulated her friend on the success of the bonnet. "I knew it would do the thing, and your judicious admiration of the little girl, I am sure that went quite to the heart of the parent."

Miss Briggs disclaimed all this, with the air of anxiously wishing her denial to be discredited: and still more anxiously desiring the accusations might be true, or become so.

"Now, my dear," said Mrs. Beaumont, "do tell me, for I depend on your judgment, when I distrust

my own, do you see any *tendresse* between Emily and the Count, for I have fancied there was?"

"Oh dear, none in the world, nothing but what was due to her, as *your* niece, and you know you have been cruel to him of late, so he had nothing for it, but to reinstate himself in *your* favour by means of Emily; and really now you have mentioned the subject, I do think you carried your resentment about those men he brought rather too far, and have not been half grateful enough to him for setting your sonnet so beautifully; he told me he sat up three nights to do it, and that the man he employed to copy it out, would have given him any thing to have been allowed to publish it; the poor Count added, with a sigh, 'Oh, did I dare attempt a companion to it, and express my own sentiments, but, alas! *c'es defendu.*'"

Mrs. Beaumont went to dress in the highest possible good humour; now we are free to confess, that Miss Briggs, on this occasion, made use of more artifice and mental reservation than usual. She *had* observed the Count's manners and looks towards Emily, but it was her *own* interest, just now, to keep Mrs. Beaumont in good humour, and therefore she would not risk telling her an unwelcome truth; and however jealous Miss Briggs might be of Emily's

governing influence over her aunt, this was not a moment when it was most formidable.

If she should succeed in establishing herself in the Regent's Park, Emily would step into her place, and prevent Mrs. Beaumont from putting any obstacle in the way of *her* promotion, which, weighing her own fancied importance, and knowing the indolence of her patroness's character, might happen. Emily was going to India, but few people went there if they could get as comfortable a home here, as her rich aunt had to offer her. Mrs. Beaumont did not spend all her income, she had herself watched the accumulation of the residue, and if she did not want it, it was a great bait to Emily;—such were the reasonings of vanity and avarice!

Though young men marry, as well as those who are more advanced in life, marriage with them is the *end*, not the beginning of things; they fall in love, they go on without thinking of its consequences, their inclination, or honour, closes the business. The variation to this rule is from marriages made on speculation by young men of ruined fortune, on heiresses—that is quite another affair—but if a widower, who has no need to look for dowry, takes it into his head to marry, it becomes the business of his life, he follows every pretty girl he meets with—gets laughed at,

and takes to soberer choice : such was the case with Mynheer Van Tulip—he found himself solitary after the death of his wife, and he travelled, collected his articles of vertù—then built a house to hold them, one of the detached villas in the Regent's Park, after an Italian model—this was finished, all its treasures arranged, his little girl settled with her Swiss Governess—and now the one thing, the only thing wanting, was a *wife*—his first had been young and beautiful, but she was no companion to him; this time he would dispense with youth and beauty, they were flowers that soon faded.

In a moment of desolation of heart Miss Briggs's image came before him, and with a true mercantile idea of calculating debtor and creditor account, he took pen and paper, and drew out the following *pour et contre*.

Steady sensible woman ;	Not young, certainly not handsome.
Excellent mother, and instructress to my child :	A little doubtful as to temper :
Good manager of my house.	Perhaps too much so of myself.
Advantageous connexion.	No money. Bah ! as Napoleon used to say.

Upon the whole, *le pour* predominated, and Mr. Van Tulip made a visit next day in Stanhope-street, he was received by Mrs. Beaumont, who feared her friend Miss Briggs was out, was sure she would regret it, but she treated the thing carelessly.

Mr. Van Tulip was in person, a short, square, *Dutch built* man, with a face like one of his own tulips reversed, spreading broad at the bottom, and narrow at the top, the exact contrary to the classic oval ; of his hair, and whiskers, which were alike remarkable, it might be said :

The upper part whereof was whey,
The nether orange mixed with grey.

His conversation was as singular as his person, it was what school boys call hubble bubble, but might more elegantly be termed desultory.

“ Charming day, madam,” addressing Mrs. Beaumont, “ and charming house ! beautifully fitted up. How well I remember you and your friend in Villa da Lagretta at Naples ; delicious climate, sailing on the bay enchanting ! Vesuvius in all her glory ! you have a very pretty place, I understand, in Warwickshire ? I beg pardon, I believe it is Staffordshire, not so rich as the plains of Lombardy, but more picturesque. Oh ! yes ! I remember going into that county with my friend Lockley, do you happen to know Phil Lockley, madam ? ”

Mrs. Beaumont did not.

“ Oh, no ! before your time ; I might have looked in your face and spared you the question. Well !

though you did not know him, he was a good fellow, and a hospitable one too. Do you recollect my meeting you and Miss Briggs the first time; it was in Thorwaldson's studio. The arts not much patronized in England, ma'am!"

"I beg your pardon," said Mrs. Beaumont, "I believe Canovo sold most of his best things to English noblemen, and could not supply their orders; and our first portrait painter went all over Europe, to paint the great men who figured in the late war, and for the King of England."

"True! ma'am, I was thinking of my friend the Swede, but perhaps his turn is to come; have you ever been in Sweden, ma'am."

"Never."

"Oh, you would like it, a fine country! charming people! not so well calculated for English ladies, bad roads, bad accommodations!"

Turning short round to the window, he said, "A *camellia involuta*, I declare, are you fond of flowers? I see you are. Are there any you wish to have from the Horticultural Gardens? I belong to them, and should be too happy to get any thing, we are anxiously watching some seeds from the banks of the Swan River."

Luckily some visitor entered, and poor Mrs. Beau-

mont had time to breathe, and Mr. Vun Tulip to take his leave ; amongst her visitors was Miss Talbot.

“ Well ! my dear creature, how are you ? and how have you been these thousand ages that have elapsed since I saw you ? ”

“ Pretty well ! ” replied Mrs. Beaumont, laughing, “ only grown a good deal older in that time, as you must reasonably expect ; but considering I must now far exceed the age of Methusela, I trust I am in pretty good looks.”

“ Oh ! to be sure, I did not mean to add a day to your age, or to extract the smallest shade from your bloom ; but only to express my own feelings, and regret that we had not met for such an immeasurable time ! ”

“ Three, or at most, four days.”

“ Well my dear ! and what have you been doing to forward our grand scheme of the *Intellectuana*? ”

“ Oh, nothing ! ” replied Mrs. Beaumont, “ your plan is vastly beyond me, but Miss Briggs has entered heart and soul into it, and I suppose I must support her.”

“ To be sure, and your own importance also ! ”

“ My importance is not that of a mouse,” said Mrs. Beaumont languidly.

“ My dear ! what spell is come over you ? You,

who used to be up to everything *intellectual*! why are you failing now!"

"I do not know, but I think all those attempts end in nothing; but I am most happy to indulge Miss Briggs in *her* taste, and to promote *her* pleasure."

"Where is she?"

"Gone to one of your meetings at Miss Jenkins's?"

"Bless me! I ought to have been there also, I must have mistaken the day, surely it is not Wednesday?"

"Undoubtedly it is!"

"Well! then I must be off, Miss Fidget will canter there in five minutes, fare-ye-well."

Miss Briggs returned from her party, full of glee: she was introduced to Delphine Gay, the celebrated French poetess, the tenth Muse; she described her person, a tall, rather handsome, dark woman, with eyes, that for their fire, might have done for the Pythoness of the shrine of Apollo, in "wild phrenzy rolling;" her hair, of which she had a great profusion, of what might (if the point were stretched) be called *auburn*, but in common parlance it would be denominated *fiery red*, it hung in snaky curls, worthy of a Medusa, from her forehead to her waist, like the mane of a mermaid; but to have seen such a wonder

was enough ; the poetess spoke little, for the language around her was English, of which she did not understand a word ; some persons to whom she was introduced spoke to her in French ; but if, as asserted, authors are best in their books, it is more particularly so of poets and poetesses, for they certainly do not talk in verse, or hitch rhymes to the end of their sentences.

Miss Briggs ran herself out of breath on the subject of the Muse, and before Mrs. Beaumont could get in a word, had another wonder to talk of, Madam de Coütza, she was a phisiologist, craniologist, physiognomist united ; could tell from seeing the model of a *nose* the disposition of a person ; from that of a *forehead* the strength of the understanding ; and from one of the *mouth*, the temper. A large table at Miss Jenkins' was covered with models, and drawings also, of these features, eye-brows, that displayed the sensibility of the owner; but above all, for curiosity, were the models of *ears*, a feature in general scarcely thought of, but now described to be of the greatest importance in making the character ; a round small ear indicated a great *amiability* ; a long ear *understanding* ; an ear setting out from the head, and large, displaying *folly* ; in short, Miss. Briggs had learnt in one

hour a complete science : when quite exhausted she stopped, and Mrs. Beaumont said,

“ Now, my dear ! if you have patience to hear *my* tale, perhaps you may regret that you were not here, for *I* have had your *preux chevalier*, Mynheer Van Tulip, greatly disappointed not to see you ; in the space of twenty minutes he took me three times over the Alpas, and back again to England ; then he dragged me to Sweden, thence to the Swan River, and we finally landed at the Horticultural Gardens at Chiswick ; but to recompense you for your disappointment, I shall ask him to dinner the first party I make.”

“ Apropos of dinner,” said Miss Briggs, “ I met to day Miss Cummings, and I pledged myself, or rather *you*, my amiable friend, to give a dinner according to her chemical plan.”

“ You have not surely been so imprudent, the thing is quite impossible, you know Dupuis, who I am afraid never would be persuaded into your scheme, is going to Paris for a fortnight, to settle the affairs of his father, who is lately dead, and if I give any dinner at all, it must be this week, before he goes.”

“ Oh, then, when he is gone is just the time to do what *I* wish, and what I am sure would redound to your credit ; have the dinner I propose when Dupuis is away ; Richardson is quite equal to it, under the

instruction of Miss Cunnings, and I will take care and procure that to its fullest extent."

"Well! then I must invite the Van Tulip to that! and remember you take all consequences as to its effects, to its producing cholera."

"Most willingly, only name your day!"

"Next Tuesday sen'night will suit me, but will it give sufficient notice?"

"Oh yes! for the party I propose!"

"Remember," said Mrs. Beaumont, "I do not like a dinner of more than *twelve*; who will you have?"

"First, Miss Cunnings, Miss Jenkins, Madam Delphine Gay, by way of variety."

"But I do not know her."

"I will manage the introduction, leave it to me. Miss Talbot, that makes six women; you will of course have equal proportions."

"To be sure."

"Well then, Dr. Marvel, Mr. Flemming, and your favourite Crayon!"

"And your friend Van Tulip!"

"Yes, and Count St. Ange!"

"That is only five?"

"True, but what do you say to Mr. Greffier, he

is a most intelligent person, and worthy of such a party!"

"Well then, it is fixed, you will write the notes, and you must also coax Richardson into your plan."

"Never fear, I will manage her."

CHAPTER VI.

THERE is nothing more difficult in the attempt, nor more hopeless in its execution, than to administer consolation to those who *will not* be consoled ; who consider every evil that happens to them, not as the decree of Him who cannot err, nor as the consequence of their own folly, and its just punishment ; and, who therefore submit to it with humble resignation ; but, on the contrary, resist it, complain of it, and imagine themselves to be *marked* out for suffering ; who, in one moment of anguish, forget all the blessings they possess, and perhaps have possessed, without one thought of the *Great Giver* ; and bemoan themselves as if they were the *most* unfortunate and the *only* unfortunate, people in the world.

Of this class was Mrs. Villiars. That her beauti-

ful son, who had led a life of undeviating prosperity and senseless folly, that he should at last feel the consequences of the latter, and suffer under it, was more than she could comprehend. She measured not her grief by those who have been wholly bereaved of much worthier sons, on whom perhaps their whole dependance for support rested.

Miss Shirley, who understood her friend's character, and whilst she despised its weakness, pitied the sufferings that weakness brought on her, judiciously let her at first sob, and complain; — to the latter, she in the kindest tone of commiseration ventured to say,

“ But, my dear Mrs. Villiars, the case is not hopeless ; Colonel Wetheral did not say it was ; why should you distrust the goodness of God ; address your prayers to Him, and He will relieve your distress, or support you under it ; wait calmly till to-morrow, we may hear a better account.”

“ Oh, then, you do not think Augustus is in so very hopeless a state ; a thousand blessings on you for saying so.”

And, with the usual fluctuations of a weak mind, she was as much inclined to be too sanguine, as she was before to be too desponding.

“ I do not promise you,” said Miss Shirley, “ he

can recover; the extent of the injury he has received could not be ascertained when his friend left him; but whilst there is life, there is hope, especially at his age; let us trust all to the mercy of God, and as the best means of deserving that mercy, apply for it, and endeavour to receive the sentence of the Almighty with wisdom and resignation."

Mrs. Villiars tried to benefit by this advice, but the mind, and above all, the feelings, must be used to the control of reason and religion to submit to them. An effort, however small, to subdue grief, is not wholly unprofitable, to those who make the trial.

Mrs. Villiars retired to rest at night more calm and resigned, to wait the intelligence of the morning. Colonel Wetheral was a very early visitor, and though Miss Shirley was an early riser, only Miss Neville was down stairs to receive him; his visit was short, but his report rather favourable; Mr. Villiars had spoken once; and, though he did not seem at all aware of what had happened; his shewing some symptom of recollection, in asking if Gordon was on guard in his room, was considered favourable; the nature of the injury was ascertained, it was not a fractured skull, but a severe blow on the forehead which had broken the cartilage of the nose, and of course injured all the nerves that meet on that point,

called *la clef des nerves*; tolerably confident hopes therefore were entertained of his ultimate recovery, though it would be tedious, requiring great care and *quiet*, and above all, no agitation of mind. Colonel Wetheral therefore repeated his entreaties that Mrs. Villiars would not go to her son; he arranged a plan for her hearing every day, but begged he might be allowed, occasionally, to be the bearer of the intelligence. He had his own reasons for this request; he was not, in even so short an acquaintance, insensible to the very pleasing person, and amiable manners, of Miss Neville; he had arrived at an age when domestic life is desirable, and he had reached a point in his profession when it ceases to be inconvenient, or imprudent. He was prevailed on to stay breakfast, talked most agreeably on general subjects, and when speaking of Mr. Villiars, and other young men under his command, he shewed so much kind feeling, and high principle, it was impossible not to like him.

• Those who possess those qualities never find any occasion too trivial to shew them: they are the corner stones, without which the edifice would be frail and perishable; and, like adamant, you see them in the minutest part.

When he was gone, Caroline exclaimed, "Well,

if Colonel Wetheral was twenty years younger, I do think I should be in love with him ; he is so gentleman-like, and seems to be so good, and right thinking a man. Take care of yourself, Miss Neville, for he seems to intend often to visit here."

" You need not have objected to his age," said Miss Shirley, laughing, " for perhaps you are doomed, Caroline, to an older person ; few men in India, have it in their power to marry till they are middle-aged, or what you call *old* ; so make up your mind to it ; I advise you."

Mrs. Villiars was in ecstacies at the more favourable account of her son, but, in despair at not being allowed to go to him, thought herself very ill-used on the occasion, and was hardly to be kept from breaking through the restriction. It was, by degrees, broke to her what the injury was, and the fear that it might, if he recovered, be a source of ill health for the rest of his life, and it certainly would, in a great degree, destroy his beauty. Colonel Wetheral described his nose as bent nearly flat, and his eyes and mouth likely to be disfigured. His mother was almost frantic at this intelligence ; she had always indulged in far more than a mother's privileged admiration of his person, but the judicious reasoning of

Miss Shirley, calmed her, and induced her to thankfulness that his life was spared.

A few days after this, for Miss Shirley had consented to prolong her visit till her friend's mind was more at ease, they were rather surprised by a visit from Mr. Melbourne; he brought them letters from India, and rather anticipated the contents of them, by saying that Mr. Edward Shirley had, in a letter to him, expressed his wish that his daughters should remain another year in England: he gave no reason for it, but desired, if his sisters could not continue to receive them, that he, Mr. Melbourne, would find some eligible place for them.

Miss Shirley, before she opened her letter, to receive the request from her brother's hand, declared her readiness to retain Caroline another year, if she liked so dull a life as her's: she could not answer for Mrs. Beaumont, but would rather have both under her charge, than that they should be placed where the care of them might be more doubtful.

Mr. Melbourne had forwarded letters, probably to the same purport, to Mrs. Beaumont; he had another object in his visit; what it was did not transpire; it seemed to have agitated Miss Shirley, and several times in the day the tears stood in her eyes. Her affectionate niece could not, at last, help ex-

pressing her anxiety, least there was anything in the letters from India to distress her aunt.

"Oh! no, my dear! it is merely a personal concern, and one in which no participation will give me any relief."

Mr. Melbourne sat some time with Mrs. Villiars, and endeavoured to soften, or rationalize her grief: he knew her well; his wife had, as well as Miss Shirley, been her school-fellow and intimate, and, though all three were of very different dispositions, they formed an affectionate trio; Mrs. Melbourne and Miss Shirley were much better suited, and more worthy of each other, than Mrs. Villiars was of the companionship of either.

If we do not feel obliged to betray the whole of the conference between Mr. Melbourne and Miss Shirley, which lasted some time, one circumstance is necessary to be explained.

Miss Shirley consulted him, as to the propriety of acquainting Mr. Villiar's sister of his situation, and she learned from him, what she had before but too much reason to apprehend, that Mrs. Forester's conduct, in Dublin, was anything but what was respectable, if there really was no greater harm; she *professed* the greatest affection for her husband, nursed him through a dangerous illness, and yet was never with-

out some young man, and often one of not the most perfect character, in her train, riding, walking, or dancing; and, what was the most to be lamented, she made her daughter, a fine shewy girl of eleven years old, a sort of chaperone to her; he strongly recommended her being immediately acquainted with her brother's situation, and urged to return to England, adding,

"I hope her mother's influence, and yours, my dear madam, in a scene of sickness, may make some impression on her: she idolizes her brother; perhaps it might break through connexions, and conduct, so little creditable to herself, and her family."

"Alas!" replied Miss Shirley, "her mother's indulgence and blindness to the faults of her children, give me little hopes from her; but I will not shrink from the painful task, if I can do any good."

After communicating the name of the person who was now "lord of the ascendant," as well as told those who had previously been so favoured, Mr. Melbourne took his leave.

By Miss Shirley's advice, and Miss Neville's pen, a letter was written to Mrs. Forester, acquainting her with her brother's accident, and saying, that if

she wished to see him alive, she must not delay her return, as his life was considered still in great danger. The daily accounts received of him were rather more favourable, but the future consequences on his health were equally to be dreaded, as the immediate danger.

In about ten days his surgeons pronounced him able to be moved with safety in one of Hannan's carriages; his remaining at the farm house at Gilston was so very inconvenient to his medical attendants, as well as to the family who had so kindly taken him into their house, that this arrangement was made; but the time of his arriving at Marchwood was kept secret from his mother, and contrived to be during her daily airing; she knew he was to come to her house, but did not expect him so soon; and when she came home she was met by his surgeon, who prevented her rushing to his room, by assuring her, in her son's exhausted state, her agitation might be fatal to him.

When the meeting did take place, the poor invalid, partly under the influence of an opiate, and partly from the state of his subdued faculties, could only be made to comprehend his mother was there, but he never spoke to her; when she left his room her grief was almost uncontrollable; she bemoaned the loss of his beauty, even more than the apparent loss of his understanding; she could not look at him

without terror, though the extent of the mischief was not visible from under the bandages with which his face was covered.

Miss Shirley took her place by his bed-side for hours together, and by her tranquil, composed manner was able to administer to his comforts : his mother in her agitated state could not do so.

Violent emotions are never lasting, and Mrs. Villiars by degrees got accustomed to her son's distressing state, and was able frequently to go into his room and look calmly on him : he sometimes seemed sensible of her presence, and, if she pressed his hand, returned it faintly. His judicious nurse, Miss Shirley, saw an amendment, though but a trifling one, from day to day, and cheered her friend, Mrs. Villiars, by reporting it, and it was confirmed by the surgeons.

At about the end of a week from Mr. Villiar's arrival at home, his sister, Mrs. Forester, arrived ; the scene between her and her mother may be easily imagined—it is not so easily described ; Mrs. Forester fancied she should not find her brother alive, and was prepared accordingly ; when she found him recovering, she was inclined to reproach her mother for sending for her, as she was enjoying herself very much in Dublin.

She had not been many days at Marchwood when

an infamous paragraph appeared in the *Times*, that clearly pointed to her, and her conduct ; designating her as the young and beautiful wife of an officer of *extensive* command, who had suddenly left Dublin, under pretence of the illness of a brother, but that report was busy in ascribing it to another cause, as a gallant naval officer, who had for some time been on that tack, was lately appointed to a ship ; his predecessor was a lady-killing Lancer ; the editor of the paper pretended to make this statement with *regret*, as the husband of the lady, who seemed passive on the occasion, was a man highly esteemed.

Miss Shirley felt sure this was levelled at Mrs. Forester, and regretted most sincerely that there should be some ground for it, in her indiscreet conduct.

Mrs. Villiars read the paragraph, and wondered over it, who it could mean, and referred to her daughter, saying that as she, "had just left Dublin, she must know who it was ;" a slight blush came over Mrs. Forester's face, but she declared her entire ignorance, adding.

"Really, Dublin is so large a place, one cannot know all the scandal going on there."

"I thought," said Mrs. Villiars, "the circle of society in Dublin was so much narrower than that of London, such things were more easily known."

At this moment Mrs. Forester met Miss Shirley's eye, in which there was a mild reproof at her duplicity, and a penetrating glance that said, "Are you unconscious?" She coloured deeply, and made an excuse to leave the room; but the ice was broke, Miss Shirley had known her from infancy, and often taken the privilege of a friend to tell her of her faults, the predominant of which was *vanity*, and she did not mean to let this occasion pass unheeded; at the same time she felt the delicacy of the task she was undertaking; and meant, before coming to any explanation with Mrs. Forester, to discover exactly the terms on which she stood with her husband

Her feelings were greatly excited by the deplorable state in which she found her brother, he seemed to possess no power of articulation, or at least a very imperfect one, he had only uttered a few words since his accident, and those were rather incoherent, nor was it certain he distinguished objects; the bandage was taken from his eyes, they had a glassy, fixed look, but he certainly *heard* perfectly; it was the sound of his mother's voice that produced the pressure of her hand that so much delighted her; and he seemed to have the same recognition of his sister, for when she came to his bed-side, and called him her dear Augustus, he made an effort to put out his

hand, and suffered her to retain it in hers ; all the rest was deplorable, but the surgeons said, one and twenty days must pass before any material change could be expected, and only fifteen of them were elapsed ; that there had been a concussion of the brain no doubt was entertained, and therefore life was very uncertain, and *perfect* recovery was almost hopeless.

Mrs. Forester sat hours by the side of her brother's bed. Perhaps there is no better place for reflection than either *on* a sick bed, or by the *side* of one ; there all the fleeting pleasures, all the vain pursuits of this idle world, vanish into air ; nought appears but human weakness and human frailty ; the projects of ambition, the allurements of vanity, fade before that awful eternity, which is opening before us. It may reasonably be hoped that some useful reflections passed in those moments over Mrs. Forester's mind : "How uncertain," might she say, "is all that we call happiness ! two short weeks ago and Augustus possessed every thing that was enviable in life, now he is all but a corpse!"

We hope these *were* her thoughts, and that they carried themselves home to her bosom, and led to a review of her own conduct, but we do not take upon us to say that it was so ; perhaps to avoid Miss Shir-

ley, and her scrutiny, might often send her to her melancholy post, for however the sanguine temper of Mrs. Villiars might lead her to hope for her son's recovery, it was impossible for less prejudiced persons to see its probability in the same light.

The regimental surgeon, besides one of great eminence from London, attended every day, and often with the former came Colonel Wetheral, and sometimes a Mr. Gordon, a friend of Captain Villiars; the former not unfrequently staid to breakfast or luncheon, as the time of day happened, and the kind interest he took in the unfortunate sufferer endeared him to the whole family; he was well acquainted with Major-General Forester, had served under him, and, of course, he entered into the concerns of the family. Mrs. Villiars was helpless in the extreme, so that Miss Shirley was obliged on many occasions not only to advise, but to act; Mrs. Forester drew back, indeed hers was a delicate position; she was tenderly attached to her brother, as much so as a vain, selfish woman can be, but other feelings were sometimes excited, almost without her will; if her brother died, she should be in a very different situation than she now was, she should then be a great heiress!

Miss Shirley watched with benevolent anxiety the different turns in her feelings, and from what she

gathered, both from the surgeons and Col. Wetheral, she began to fear there was little, or no hope of a favourable issue to Mr. Villiars's illness, though the crisis was not passed; — she endeavoured in the gentlest way to prepare Mrs. Villiars for the worst: at first she would not hear that worst mentioned.

No! no! she was sure God would hear the prayers of an almost distracted mother.

Miss Shirley in vain repeated that HE would order every thing for the best, that in HIS WISDOM, as well as HIS MERCY, must be our trust; and then gently suggested how much worse than death, would be a lingering life of pain and suffering, deprived, perhaps, of some of his faculties.

It was impossible at first to make Mrs. Villiars imagine such a state, as connected with her beautiful and beloved son, but there are many painful ideas that the mind at first rejects, which by repeated representation it grows familiarized to; the poor mother saw from hour to hour her darling child lying, all but senseless, and sometimes apparently in a state of suffering; and nothing so easily reconciles us to the loss of those we love, as seeing their protracted sufferings; but there were times when her grief at the idea was heart-rending, she felt the comfort—the happiness of having her friend Miss Shirley with her;

for *she* was one of those who thought “the house of mourning better than the house of feasting;” indeed into the latter her inclination never led her, but to the former, she was a ready, and a welcome guest.

Caroline too took a useful part on the occasion, she frequently amused Mrs. Villiars by reading to her ; and, by her aunt’s direction, often consoled her, by selecting such subjects as were suited to calm the mind, and lead it to trust in Heaven for strength and succour.

Miss Neville’s station was generally by the bedside of her suffering cousin, excepting when relieved by his sister ; it was there Col. Wetheral often found her, and it was there his admiration for her increased ; and it was there a sort of confidential intercourse took place between them, that was unobserved by the rest of the family.

Whilst day after day crept on towards the important crisis of the disease, Miss Shirley observed Mrs. Forester unusually agitated one morning at receipt of two letters by the post ; to which the emotion was owing she could not ascertain : one, which she said was from her husband, she opened ; the other she carefully deposited in her *sachet*.

Mrs. Villiars asked if Gen. Forester was coming to England ?

" Oh no ! " was the careless answer, and she retired to her room ; when she next appeared, it was evident her time had been spent in tears ; and the following morning, whilst reading the paper, she fainted away. On her recovery she was anxious to account for this occurrence by assuring her mother it was what often happened to her, and had been occasioned by her having sat up part of the night with dear Augustus."

Nothing could be farther from the character of Miss Shirley than that prying curiosity which is attributed to ladies of her age and condition; but, accidentally taking up the paper, she saw in a conspicuous column,

" Sailed yesterday under secret orders, Captain—of the Medusa."

She recognised the name as that of Mrs. Forester's present *attentif*, and rejoiced at the circumstance,—it accounted for the fainting, and for the unopened letter. But was it possible ! and her pure upright mind revolted from the idea, that the wife of one, who had the character of being the kindest and most indulgent of husbands, the mother of several children, one of them almost approaching womanhood, could indulge in an attachment, so contrary to her duty, so derogatory to her character.

Alas, it is but too common a situation into which

vanity, a thirst of admiration, and an insatiable love of amusement, hurries thoughtless young women, especially those whose husbands are, from professional duties, compelled to leave them much to themselves; but *now* might perhaps be the moment to save her, to snatch her from ruin, it must be tried, however ungrateful and uncongenial the task.

On this evening Mrs. Villiars insisted that her daughter should not visit the sick chamber, but leave her brother to Miss Neville's care.

As the party sat round the work-table, Mrs. Villiars mentioned, with a weak sort of pity, a woman of high rank who had dishonoured her husband, disgraced her family, and abandoned her children; calling her, “a poor unfortunate creature!”

“I, on the contrary,” said Miss Shirley, “call her a wicked, unprincipled woman.”

“Oh, my dear, you are so good yourself, you make no allowance for the temptation weaker people fall by, and she had a very disagreeable husband.”

“Neither form any excuse, in my opinion, for such conduct: we are assured, by the highest authority that, ‘we shall not be tempted above what we are able to bear, and that with the temptation will be given a way to escape,’ if we really desire to escape: we daily pray, ‘not to be led into temptation,’ but

we seldom think it necessary to refrain from those indulgences by which *we lead ourselves* into it. A love of incessant dissipation, inordinate vanity, and desire of admiration, such as a married woman should shun, not covet, too often end in such direction of morals. I am willing to believe that not one in ten of the women who fall into this snare are at all aware in the *beginning* of such *liaisons*, where they will end. I consider the first step is a marriage of interest without inclination."

"Oh, but," said Mrs. Villiars, "that is not always the case, for you may remember Lady W—— all but died for love of Lord W——, and in three years they were separated, though, I believe, they never *proved* any thing criminal against her; but they disagreed so."

"That is true," said Miss Shirley, "but Lady W—— was only saved by the interference of her mother, and I don't know whether those *violent* love matches, where all prudence is set at defiance, are not as likely as any other to turn out unhappily; what is violent cannot be lasting, especially in ill-regulated, and uncontrolled minds. Persons who have been used to indulge every capricious fancy are just as likely to change those fancies towards their husbands as towards their caps and bonnets."

“ But, my dear Margaret, if you will neither have girls marry for love, nor for money, what are they to marry for ?”

“ I know,” said Miss Shirley, “ all that old maids say on the subject of matrimony is laughed at ; it is supposed we can know nothing of love ; it is asserted we never can have *felt* the passion, when perhaps we have been the victims of attachment,” a little chocking in Miss Shirley’s throat gave her friend time to say.

“ No one could be a better judge than you are, of all that relates to the best affections of the heart.”

Miss Shirley gave a deep sigh, and said, “ I consider the present system of match-making the most detrimental possible to domestic happiness : girls are from their cradles taught that to make a good match, and if possible acquire a *brilliant* establishment, is the end and aim of their education ; they are, in fact, either in their own persons or that of their mothers, as complete *fortune hunters* as the Irish adventurers, who, of old, used to frequent Bath, when that was a place of fashionable resort—the Captain Cormorants, are now in the shape of Lady Mothers ; and their daughters are taught that balls are, of all other places, the most successful marts for matrimony : a

girl dances three times with the same man—her mother smiles on him, and flatters him—he proposes—and, with no other recommendation but his rent-roll, or expentancies, he is accepted ; all that is *known* of his character, is general report ; all that is *seen* of his temper, is what may be displayed in chusing carriages, and jewels : and, on such an acquaintance at the end of a few weeks, the happiness of a whole life is trusted — what can be expected ? the duties of the new engagement, however solemnly promised at the altar, are never thought of after the ceremony is over—to *love, honour, and obey*, are considered mere words of form, though God and man are call'd to witness the contract.”

“ At least, my dear mother,” said Mrs. Forester, “ you can not accuse yourself of committing *me* in this way ; perhaps,” she added, with a sigh, “ it would have been better if you had made the choice ‘for me.’ ”

“ My dear child,” said Mrs. Villiars, “ I always wished you and your brother to please yourselves, do not *you* give me reason, as I fear he has done, to regret my indulgence.”

Mrs. Forester fetched a deep sigh, put down her work—took up a book and went to the other side of the fire, coaxed Azore into her lap and placed a

screen, under pretence of shading her eyes, between herself and Miss Shirley ; who said :

“ Old maid as I am, I am far from being an enemy to matrimony ; on the contrary, I think, to the unmarried are denied those most delightful of all enjoyments, domestic, and maternal pleasures : we too often feel singleness is *not* blessedness, for we have no power to contribute to the happiness of others ; we can, only on some occasions lighten their cares. If a brother loses his wife, his unmarried sister can, in part, supply the place to his children, though she brings no comfort to *his* bosom ; but we are, I think, a necessary part of the system of providence ; I have often said, and I say it now, that I think a woman of large independent fortune is often much happier single, than married ; for if she is not a prey to a needy man, she at all events loses the extensive power of doing good she would otherwise have possessed.”

“ But,” said Mrs. Villiars, “ if you would not have great fortunes marry, how would you continue their property, or how would you provide for younger sons ?”

“ I think,” replied Mrs. Shirley, “ the present day is particularly unfavourable to matrimony ; and though I do not agree with Mr. Malthus, in all points, I

think this country *is* over peopled, and I always rejoice when I hear of respectable people going to the Swan River, and various other settlements—there is a fine, luxuriant and immense part of the world unpeopled, and we in this little Island have more than we can maintain."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Villiars, "I do not understand Political Economy."

"Nor I neither," replied Miss Shirley, "but I can see that every profession is now so crowded, that but few can make their way, in either the church, law, or physic, till life is almost too far advanced for them to care about marrying. And look at the family of a man, for example, who has from five to ten thousand a year—he has four sons, the eldest is the only one that can marry during his life time, he has spent a younger child's fortune on the education of each of the others; if they marry, it must be some city heiress, whose father has made a fortune by speculating, perhaps, in soldier's shoes. I call that, and all such, *matches of money*; they can seldom be marriages of happiness. Then the daughters in such a family, I have already described; they marry also for interest, and all the young men who do not sell themselves for wealth, and who are, from their poverty, afraid to *flirt*, as it is called, with young

women, and raise expectations they have no power of fulfilling, often attach themselves to young married women, and our intercourse with the continent, and our eagerness in adopting foreign manners, facilitates and increases the evil, for such things are tolerated abroad as according with corrupt manners. Perhaps, at first, by this devoted attention, nothing is meant but the amusement of the hour, and the *safety*, as it is supposed, of the thing, encourages it; but the wife has, perhaps, married, as I before described, the *estate*, and not the *man*; she finds her husband, if not weak and despicable, still not a person to engage her affection; she is drawn on, I believe, often, without the smallest intention of wrong, except, that of knowing a married woman should steadily *repulse* attention from any man but her husband—she listened to the voice of the charmer,—her *vanity* is gratified—she has been educated in *vanity*, and, at the shrine of *vanity*, her peace, if not her character, and all that is dear to her in life, is sacrificed:—her husband is jealous—reproaches her,—and if they have not kind and judicious friends, to interfere and patch up *peace*—but not *happiness*—if she gives way to her temper, she has nothing for it but to throw herself on her lover, for such she has allowed him to be; though perhaps this catastrophe is the last thing in the world *he*

wished or intended ; and she is lost for ever, to her friends, and to society."

" Well, my dear aunt," said Caroline, " you have drawn a dismal picture of matrimony."

" Only matrimony on false principles, my dear neice."

" I agree with Caroline," said Mrs. Villiars.

Whilst Miss Shirley had been speaking, she perceived that Mrs. Forester had been crying, and, as she concluded her description, she burst into violent hysterical sobs.

" My dearest child!" exclaimed Mrs. Villiars, " what can be the matter with you! my good friend's dismal picture, which she must allow us to laugh a little at, as coming from her, has overcome you; or is it your watching so much by dear Augustus's bed-side?"

" I believe," said Mrs. Forester, when a little recovered, " it is my attendance on my dear brother that has weakened my nerves, and I have foolishly taken up rather a pathetic book, one beyond my present state of feeling."

This excuse pacified her anxious mother, who intreated her to go to bed, and have some whey and sal volatile; to this she readily consented.

Mrs. Villiars accompanied her daughter to her

room, but she would not suffer her to stay, assuring her that she should be much better left to herself, and to quiet.

As she returned to the drawing room, Caroline said :

" But, my dear Aunt, if you think marriages made on so short an acquaintance cannot be happy, what do you think of those we read of that were made by parents, without any knowledge or consent of the parties themselves? If I recollect right, Lady Rachael Russel, who was a pattern of conjugal and maternal affection, married her children according to her own will, and pleasure; I think she chose a wife for her son, married him, and then sent him abroad whilst she educated his wife. How could such matches turn out happily?"

" Women, my dear," said Miss Shirley were then very differently educated, and very differently esteemed. *Lady Rachael Russel was a very distinguished person in her time; and even long before that, in the Elizabethan age, a few women, the Queen herself, Lady Jane Grey, and one or two more, had classical educations like men; but the rest were mere housewives, they knew nothing beyond their Bibles, and a cookery book; they were no companions, even for their husbands, who were themselves but indifferently*

educated ;—but they knew their *duties*, which were to superintend the establishment, sit at the head of their tables, and look after their children—they lived in dull state, they were not approachable—they mixed not in society, as the women of the present day do ; they had been taught to think rank and opulence enough, their wishes went no farther. But now women mix so in the world, and if I may be allowed to say so, are so dissipated in their habits, and, so relaxed in their manners, they run into a thousand dangers of which their solemn great grandmothers knew not the existence : as the importance of woman increases in the scale of society, so does their individual danger and their responsibility increase.”

“ I think,” said Mrs. Villiars, “ you draw a sad, dreary picture of life, my dear, I would have it joyous and happy, unclouded by care.”

“ And so would I,” said Miss Shirley, “ if the thing were possible, but the world is growing too worldly ; as we improve in knowledge, we seem to retrograde in virtue ; and much that is now wrong in morals and habits, in this country, I fear, we owe to our intercourse with the Continent. I recollect a very wise man who said ‘ that the abuse of words was one of the greatest evils under the sun, when you cease to call vices by their *proper names* you soon get to

soften them almost into virtues.' The French call an attachment, which at last ends in a breach of the seventh commandment, *une affaire de cœur*, and it seems nothing, at least nothing *criminal*. But, my dear Mrs. Villiars, you are tired, and why should we prolong a conversation so uninteresting to you?"

The parties separated for the night, but Caroline going as was usual, into her aunt's dressing room, found her in deep meditation, with her head leaning on her hand; she hesitated a moment at the door, but on Miss Shirley's lifting up her head, and saying,

"Come in, dear Caroline, I want to speak to you," she entered and seated herself by the fire opposite her aunt: who said,

"I cannot help feeling some regret that I have involved you, Caroline, in this scene of distress, of sickness, and probable death; for I have no idea Mr. Villiars can recover, or that his recovery is to be desired, for, with a concussion of the brain, which it is now certain he has, very few recover to any enjoyment of life: it is awful to think in how thoughtless and unprepared a state he will probably enter into eternity; for all these days he has lingered have been useless in preparing for his great account, for he seems to have been hardly conscious of even animal existence; but we must pray for him, and leave him

to the uncovenanted mercies of God ; but it is of you, Caroline, I wanted to talk : I now regret having brought you here, not but I know and feel, that a house of sickness, as this is, and of sorrow, as I fear it will soon be, is calculated to improve the heart, and teach us the proper estimate of all earthly good. Yet, as there is sufficient of sorrow mixed in every one's cup, I would not voluntarily have run you into this, and though *I* cannot desert my dear friend in her affliction, I have been thinking how *I could* dispose of you."

" My dear, dear, aunt," exclaimed Caroline, " don't send me away, let me share with you whatever of grief or distress may visit this house ; let me learn of you how to be useful : I know and feel it is a lesson I shall never forget, and I do think I am sometimes a comfort to Mrs. Villiars, and if not so to you, I am a relief to Miss Neville, to whom I feel even on this short acquaintance attached, and Mrs. Forester is a charming person."

" So she is, my dear, but she is one of whom I wish to *warn* you : her manners are fascinating, I wish her conduct was as irreproachable."

" My dear aunt, what can you mean ? I never heard any body who seemed more amiable and do-

mestic, or who talked with more affection of her children, than she does."

" You are new to the world, my dear Caroline, and of course apt to judge from appearances ; and I grieve, particularly in this case, to tell you they are too often fallacious. Mrs. Forester has been unfortunate in her education : she *might* have been made as amiable as she is captivating ; I never knew a more engaging child ; but you must have seen enough of my poor, kind hearted, friend, Mrs. Villiars, to be aware what her system if indulgence towards her children has been ; I often, and often, combatted the matter with her, but incessant admiration of their beauty, constant and lavish praise of their talents, and unrestrained gratification of every wish, has made them both grow up vain, self-willed, and and inconsiderate ; the world has done the rest. Mrs. Forester *talks* as if principle ruled her action, when in fact, her only measure is, the *opinion of the world*. Her beauty, which she retains wonderfully, for her complexion is as blooming, and her hair as luxuriant, as they were at eighteen, procured her a host of admirers ; amongst them, Colonel Forester carried the day, he was violently in love with her, but her mother did not think it as advantageous a match as she ought to make, and opposed it more violently

than she usually did anything her daughter fancied ; and I believe it was that very opposition, so unusual, that made Julia Villiars, Mrs. Forester. I have not seen a great deal of her since her marriage, but my intimacy with her mother has always, from her childhood, given me the privilege of openly speaking my mind to her. I have heard much of her conduct that has given me concern ; her insatiable love of admiration is her bane ; she cannot exist without incessant sacrifices at the altar of her vanity."

" What sort of man is General Forester ? "

" I believe an amiable man, but with a very hasty temper; she has however, under that apparent *naïveté*, a good deal of tact, and I have never heard of their living otherwise than well together; but his professional duties unfortunately call him too much away from her, and I have been told of some instances of indiscretion, that make me tremble for her; and I have not been without my fears, my dear Caroline, that some of the plausible, though erroneous, maxims she broaches, may mislead you, and it is on that account I do not like her as your companion : before me, she is on her guard, for she knows I should unhesitatingly reprove her ; for those reasons, and a wish not to involve you in a scene of distress, for those you have no tie of friendship to, (though it is in

such scenes the heart learns its best lesson, and to be useful in occasions of trial, brings the greatest satisfaction to the mind,) I proposed your removal; I am sure Mrs. Lomax would receive you as her visitor, till I come to town: I cannot leave this house till the fate of this unfortunate young man is decided; and I fear it can only be decided by death."

"Pray then let me stay with you, dear aunt, and I will try to let the scenes I may witness make the proper impression on me; I always feel anxious to be useful, and I can't help flattering myself I may be so; but if I am *le trop*, I am sure you will tell me so."

Caroline wished her aunt good night, and on her own pillow reflected a good deal on what she had said respecting Mrs. Forester, and it occurred to her, though it had never done so before, that she never heard her talk of her husband; she spoke with enthusiasm of her children, of the beauty of the daughter, for she had only one, and her sons, of which there were two, were dear, delightful creatures! but when the veil which her fascinating voice and manner threw over her conversation was stript off, Caroline could recollect many sentiments and opinions that were not, she was sure, in accordance with those of her aunt Shirley; and

she determined to examine what Mrs. Forester said more accurately ; and a slight suspicion arose in her mind as to the bearing of some observations that had fallen from her aunt before Mrs. Forester's hysterics

CHAPTER VII.

THE following morning Colonel Wetheral accompanied the surgeon, or rather brought him in his gig, the former breakfasted with Mrs. Villiars and her family, whilst the latter remained with his patient, and he gratified his hostess very much by repeating the anxious enquiries made after her son, not only by all his brother officers, but by many of the privates in his company, by whom he was greatly beloved ; he also brought a spaniel belonging to Captain Villiars, who he said was so wretched without his master, he knew not what to do with him.

Mrs. Forester's caresses of the dog were quite extravagant—she fed it—she coaxed it—she hugged it—but the dog was far from happy, he smelt about the room, and though Colonel Wetheral had given a cau-

tion not to let the dog follow him when he went up to pay a second visit to his friend, the dog darted out of Mrs. Forester's arms, and was at the door of the sick chamber before any one had power to prevent it ; no force could get him away from it ; though in general the most gentle of animals, he became quite fierce when any attempt was made to dispossess him of his place, as sentry ; at last he took a favourable opportunity, rushed in, jumped on the bed, licked the hand and even the face of his suffering, and nearly insensible master ; his caresses seemed even to rouse his torpid faculties, and he tried to stroke the dog, but he was too feeble ; he certainly knew him, and made a faint effort to articulate *Chance* : the instinct of the animal almost amounted to sense, finding his master so insensible to his efforts to excite his notice, he went round the room, dragging by the clothes each individual to the bed, but they brought no help, and when he saw Colonel Wetheral and the surgeon preparing to depart, and the latter called him, the dog jumped on the bed, placed himself at its foot, and no attempt, those in the room dare make, could dispossess him.

The report of the surgeon was far from favourable, the pulse of his patient was very variable, and spasmodic symptoms showed themselves, that indicated increased pressure on the brain.

Colonel Wetheral communicated this distressing intelligence to Miss Neville; their conference was long, and she appeared so greatly agitated when Miss Shirley met her in the hall, the latter feared the account was even worse than she acknowledged.

Miss Neville's health and spirits were both impaired by nearly a fortnight's attendance on her cousin; and when the heart is softened by grief, and the body weakened by fatigue, what, in other circumstances, would be received with pleasure, then produces painful sensations; but she shut herself up till dinner time, and then joined the family party with a tranquil countenance, and a *not unhappy* manner: what had been her conversation with Colonel Wetheral, beyond the state of the patient, must be left to time to show.

This was the nineteenth day, there were yet two days more before the fate of the sufferer could be ascertained; it was thought necessary to inform Mrs. Villars that some unfavourable symptoms had occurred; but she had got so accustomed to hear the variations, slight as they were, of the disease, with alternate hopes and fears, that the former, merely from custom, were beginning to preponderate, and they, certainly without any good reason, buoyed her up, to think her son's recovery more than possible. He was visited in the course of the day by his London surgeon, he con-

firmed the report of the morning ; and in the evening came down the assistant regimental surgeon again, to sit up all night : he had done so frequently in the beginning of the illness, but latterly had discontinued it : this circumstance alarmed all but Mrs. Villiars.

One knows not on such occasions how far a merciful Providence blinds us to evils, till they are inevitable ; and for that reason must be borne.

As the place of his female nurses by the side of Mr. Villiar's bed was occupied, the ladies passed the evening together round their work-table.

" My dear Fanny," said Mrs. Villiars, " what can you and Colonel Wetheral have to talk so long about, he always stays half an hour after he has taken leave of us, having a *tête à tête* with you."

The deepest crimson dyed the usually pale cheeks of Miss Neville, but her aunt went on :

" I really like him ; he is what, in my youth, was called a very *pretty* man. I wonder if he has any fortune; if he has, I think you could not do better Fanny. I wish you may be so lucky as to catch him, it would be far better for you living in Portman Square Barracks, or at Windsor, than with your odious sister-in-law."

The true state of the case was evident to every one but Mrs. Villiars : who continued,

"I don't mean to distress you, my dear, but I think you might put a little confidence in such a circle of friends as we are."

Miss Neville seemed choking, and without the power of articulation. Miss Shirley tried to turn the conversation by complaining of the heat of the room ; she got up, and at the same time Miss Neville also, to open the door into another room ; when their hands were on the lock, Miss Neville, said,

"Do come for a moment with me into this room."

There she explained the whole mystery, and begged Miss Shirley would communicate to her aunt Colonel Wetheral's proposal, and she escaped to her own apartments.

Mrs. Villiars was delighted at her niece's prospects, which were, in a pecuniary point of view, better than she could have expected for her. Colonel Wetheral had a very good income now, and would eventually have a much larger.

Mrs. Villiars was one of those people whose understanding can only take in *one* idea at a time ; this occupied her for the evening, almost to a transient forgetfulness of her son, but when she, with Miss Shirley, visited his door on her way to their rooms, the surgeon only opened it a little way, and intreated

they would not come in, as his patient was restless, and he was most anxious to keep him quiet.

Mrs. Villiars was greatly disappointed, and complained of the medical people wishing to keep her from her son.

Miss Shirley thought she saw something of unusual anxiety in Mr. Maclean's manner, and feeling the necessity of preparing Mrs. Villiars for an event that now seemed but too probable, she ventured to say,

“I fear Mr. Villiars is worse to-night.”

At first his mother was not willing to allow this inference; but as it flashed upon her, she expressed such deep anxiety, that Miss Shirley accompanied her to her dressing-room, when she burst into a most passionate fit of tears; these her judicious friend did not attempt to repress, well knowing they always bring relief; but when the paroxysm had a little subsided, she said,

“We must all, you know, submit to His WILL in whom are the issues of life and death.”

“Oh!” exclaimed Mrs. Villiars, “I cannot lose my darling son, and survive him!”

“We know not,” returned her friend, “what we can bear; God's mercy is able to support us under any trial He thinks fit to send us. You, my dear

Mrs. Villiars, have survived the loss of an excellent husband ; you will, with the blessing of God, support that of your son, if He ordains it should be so."

" But is it not very hard on me, that I should be called to such trials ?"

" It is by trials that we are fitted for Heaven ; we grow too fond of this world and its enjoyments ; the loss of them carries our thoughts and our wishes to a better ; and we are sometimes punished by our Heavenly Father for our too great love and dependence on perishable things."

" I cannot believe," said Mrs. Villiars, " that we can love our children too much."

" Oh ! we can love any thing too much, that takes us off from our dependance on God, and places our happiness in the things of this world ; there are many events, that we short-sighted mortals think sorrows, that are blessings in disguise. You, my good friend, are ready to murmur at the prospect of losing a beloved son ; think for a moment how much worse than the *loss* of him, would be seeing him drag a life of misery and debility : after the severe blow he has had, the understanding is often impaired, or annihilated, or the limbs paralyzed ; death, under such circumstances, is a happy release."

" Do not talk to me of a happy release that would deprive me of my darling child !"

"We are often commanded, as a test of our love and obedience to God, to part with what we most love here. And we cannot tell how He will sustain us, under such a trial, unless we apply to Him for such support: let me read a prayer to you, my dear friend; believe me, addressing yourself to the God of mercy will strengthen your mind."

Mrs. Villiars consented, and Miss Shirley read that prayer in the visitation service, for the sick, "appointed for one when there appears small hope of recovery;" her afflicted friend joined fervently in it, and, after a pause, begged it might be read a second time; she was then prevailed on to go to bed, and when Miss Shirley saw her tolerably composed she left her, determining not to go immediately to bed herself, for she felt a *presentiment* that the awful crisis was about to take place; but after sitting up for two hours, and hearing all still, she retired to her bed.

About five in the morning, she heard foot steps pass and repass her door: she got up, dressed herself, and went to the sick chamber; a gentle knock at the door brought Mr. Villiars's watchful attendant, Mr. Maclean, to it: he informed her that a locked jaw had come on, and he now feared the worst; that he

had sent to town for father advice, and also information to Col. Wetheral.

As Miss Shirley could be of no use, though she offered to take Mr. Maclean's place while he got some rest, which he required ; she retired to her room, but not again to her bed ; she employed herself in such reading as would furnish her with arguments of consolation, though she had been so long inured to the school of affliction, her own mind was already well prepared for the task.

The intelligence of this alarming symptom, was luckily softened to Mrs. Villiars, from its proving a spasmodic locked jaw ; so that occasional nourishment could be given ; and when the other surgeons arrived, they did not totally give up hope, though the danger was increased ; Mrs. Villiars caught at straws, and when Col. Wetheral made his appearance, in the midst of breakfast, her reception of him, for a moment, diverted her attention from her own sorrows ; and she expressed, in a manner very gratifying to him, her satisfaction at the prospect of considering him, in future, a relation as well as a friend. Upon it being mentioned that no power could get Mr. Villiars dog, Chance, from his bed, that he lay constantly on it, watching with the most wishful, speaking eyes, his poor master, and occasionally creeping up, and

licking his hand, that every endeavour had been made to entice him by food out of the room, but the moment he saw it placed on the outside of the door, he rejected it, and returned to his post, and now orders were given that he should have it in his master's room; Colonel Wetheral said, "There is more romance about that dog, and his history, than often belongs to his species, and I must beg to be allowed to tell it: his mother belonged to a soldier, who acted as servant to Mr. Wallace, one of ours; he disliked dogs in general, and particularly this, which very often followed his servant to his rooms; one unlucky evening he returned home late, and hearing a sound of breathing in his apartment, he searched it, and in one corner, snugly rolled up on a sheep-skin carpet belonging to his gig, he found this unfortunate animal, (for so she was in the choice of her bed,) with one puppy; he called up his servant, and, in a great rage desired him to take his dog, and her puppy, and either destroy both, or quit his service.' The man promptly obeyed the order for removing the animals, but he was attached to the mother, and she was attached to him; and on his pillow he determined on a half measure, and with great reluctance, for he was a good humoured, humane fellow: he determined to

destroy only the puppy, and save the mother; he therefore carried it into the stables, threw it into a pail of water, where he *asserts* it remained three hours, it was then thrown on to a dunghill, and afterwards a quantity of horse litter thrown over it; many hours afterwards, Captain Wallace and Captain Villiars came in from riding at the same time, and, whilst they were waiting for their grooms, the former observed the unfortunate animal whose death warrant he had signed, scratching violently, ‘There is that cursed dog!’ he exclaimed, ‘I will put an end to her, I am resolved, and snatching up a log of wood that stood at the door, would have effected his purpose, had not Captain Villiar’s love of dogs, and his humanity, prompted him to arrest the arm of his companion; hearing the cause of offence, he was more eager to protect the poor animal, who, whilst they were watching her, scratched up, her apparently dead puppy, and carried it in her mouth to the stable; there Captain Villiars insisted on her remaining undisturbed: the next morning he saw her the happiest of animals, having restored her puppy to life by warmth and licking, and this puppy Captain Villiars bought, and is now shewing its gratitude on his bed.’

All were interested in the story, and both Mrs.

Villiars and her daughter, the former with tears in her eyes, declared nothing should disturb Chance in his grateful and affectionate office, and added, “I do think sometimes poor dumb animals shew more good feeling than human beings.”

“It is those,” replied Miss Shirley, “who have been humanized by living domesticated with man. I never dare trust myself to think so much fidelity and affection will have no reward beyond our care here: but we must leave that to an all wise Creator, whose mercy is over all his works—those are speculations we must not indulge in.”

The report of the medical men was not quite so hopeless as had been anticipated, though their patient had had repeated convulsions, yet there seemed a faint sort of recollection about him, which there had not been before; he had attempted to stroke the dog, but he had no power of articulation; but when Colone Wetheral went to his bedside, and took his hand, he returned its pressure slightly.

Before this benevolent person took his leave, he had a private interview with Mrs. Villiars, who was much satisfied with him, and his offer to her niece—and, of course, he had a long walk in the shrubbery with Miss Neville, who came to dinner with a happier countenance than she usually wore, and it was a

great satisfaction to her to see how much her prospects pleased her aunt, and how happily instrumental they were in drawing her attention from her own sorrows.

Mrs. Forester complained much of weak nerves and distressing feelings, which of course her mother attributed to her affectionate anxiety for her brother ; whether that was the case or not, it was not easy to determine, but there is not much danger to be apprehended from that grief which an interesting Novel will alleviate—she confined herself a good deal to her own apartment, alleging that as she must *not* sit by her brother, she was not fit company even for the small society of Marchwood—she found amusement in caressing Azore, and repeating the history of poor Chance.

Mr. Villiars passed another restless night—and no favourable change took place . youth struggles long with disease ; the only comfort that could be drawn from his situation was, that he did not seem to feel great pain, and when the faculties of the mind are torpid much of suffering must be mercifully spared.

There is nothing more difficult than to administer consolation—*religious* consolation—to those who have never turned to religion as a comforter. Many really

good persons read the Psalms and the Lessons every morning, as they would take a cup of camomile tea, to strengthen their stomachs, but their minds feel no more perceptible comfort from the one, than their bodies do instantaneous relief from the other. Religion is to them a medicine, the value of which they have never experienced, but of which they have heard the efficacy; and, as such, they resort to it, when human means of alleviation fail.

How unlike is this to the piety which daily and constantly refers every event of good and evil to an ALMIGHTY hand, which receives the one with gratitude, the other with humble submission, to HIM who knows best what is fitting for all his creatures!

It is only those who are in the constant habit of applying to their HEAVENLY FATHER for support under trials, and consolation under afflictions, that really know how to address themselves to HIM in time of need.

Poor Mrs. Villars was one of those who took religion as a dose, not very palatable, but on some occasions, and those not of an agreeable nature, very necessary. Miss Shirley took all possible pains to make her dependance on the Almighty a source of *comfort* to her.

Under these almost hopeless circumstances, she suggested to Mrs. Forester that she thought, if the reports continued so unfavourable, it would be better that General Forester should be informed that his presence in England might be necessary.

"Oh no!" exclaimed Mrs. Forester. "Why should you send for *him*, he can do no good, I think he is much better where he is; and I am sure I don't know what I should do with Julia and her governess, if he brings them over, and he cannot leave them behind in Dublin."

The tone in which this was said, even more than the words, gave Miss Shirley an unfavourable impression, but she dropped the subject.

Colonel Wetheral came as usual, and, before he went away, told both Miss Shirley and Miss Neville that he felt he had seen his poor friend Villiars for the last time; that his medical attendant thought him sinking fast; that his lower extremities were paralyzed, which perhaps had somewhat relieved the head. He added, "that he had taken on himself to write General Forester an account of affairs at Marchwood;" this was a great relief to Miss Shirley; and he added, "that if the report he received the next morning was what he feared, that he should not, at such a moment, intrude himself on the afflicted

family, trusting to them to acquaint him, if in any way he could be useful to them."

The event turned out as was expected : two hours after Mrs. Villiars had looked on her insensible, suffering son, Miss Shirley was called out of the room, and seeing Mr. Maclean, she guessed all was over ; he confirmed her conjecture, but added,

" Death visited the poor sufferer most gently, for I was hardly sensible, though by his bed-side, when he breathed his last."

The anguish of the mother, and the grief of the sister, are more easily imagined, than described ; both retired to bed, under the influence of a composing draught, and neither appeared at breakfast next morning ; but a note, from Colonel Wetheral to Miss Neville, told her that General Forester might be expected in town the following day.

That was given to grief, but violent sorrow spends itself, and towards the evening Mrs. Villiars was beginning to wish her son-in-law, now her only stay, was in England, and was well pleased to find he was so soon expected.

Miss Shirley proposed going to town and taking Caroline, she felt, in the present state of the house, she might be *de trop*, and though she intended returning herself, and remaining with her afflicted friend till the funeral was over, she thought there

was no occasion for her niece to continue in a scene where she could not be useful ; she persuaded Mrs. Forester to go up to town with her, and meet her husband and her daughter, who was to come over with him, and whom she intended sending to a sister of General Forester's, at Richmond, till some other arrangements were made.

This plan was very reluctantly consented to ; but at last it was to take place, and a servant was sent to town, to inform General Forester, when he arrived at Ibbotson's Hotel, where he would find his wife.

During the drive to town, Mrs. Forester was in a wretched state of spirits, sobbing continually ; all was done to comfort her, but she seemed in no mood to receive comfort. It was not till some time after the party arrived in town, that General Forester and his daughter came to them ; Mrs. Forester's reception of her husband was cold, and almost formal, that of her daughter enthusiastically affectionate. An arrangement was made, that General Forester should take his daughter, and her governess, to Richmond, that his wife should return to her mother's, and that he should join her there, the night before the funeral.

Miss Shirley had her own affairs to attend to ; but, just as she was setting off to Mrs. Lomax's,

her sister, Mrs. Beaumont, and Emily, came in; and, hearing what was the proposed plan respecting Caroline, the former, with her usual good nature, said,

“ If Caroline can share her sister’s room, where there is a sofa-bed unused, I shall be very happy to receive her till you return; and perhaps she may act as a bride’s-maid with her sister, to my friend Miss Briggs.”

Caroline was delighted at the proposal, and not less so at the prospect of officiating twice as bride’s-maid in the course of a few weeks, as she had promised to do the same office by Miss Neville. Mrs. Beaumont therefore took her at once to Stanhope-street.

In the afternoon, Mrs. Forester and Miss Shirley returned to Marchwood. On their way, something in the course of trifling conversation gave rise to Miss Shirley’s observing on the uncertainty of life, and the necessity of being always prepared to meet death, and added,

“ How little did your poor brother, in all the heyday of youthful spirits, when he set off on his fatal expedition, think he should never speak more!”

Mrs. Forester replied, “ I believe they are happiest that die; I am sure life is very miserable.”

" You, of all people, my dear Julia, should not say so; who has more to make life enjoyable than you?—a kind, affectionate husband."

Mrs. Forester fetched a deep sigh, from the very bottom of her heart.

" And you have promising children—and now, from this distressing death of your brother, you will be called to fulfil the duties belonging to large possessions."

Mrs. Forester fetched another, and a still deeper sigh.

Miss Shirley took courage, and said, " If you are not happy, who can be?"

" Oh! you, who are unfettered, do not know what those suffer who have other wills than their own to please."

" But you must recollect, my dear Julia, you chose the will you have to please, and you did so against both the advice and wishes, of your mother."

" Would that I had not, though I dare say my poor mother would not have chosen better, than her silly daughter."

" I have always," said Miss Shirley, " had the greatest possible horror of any interference between man and wife—but the coldness of the meeting I wit-

nessed between you and General Forester—and forgive me, if I say it seemed chiefly on *your* part—has so distressed me, that I feel anxious, if I could, to allay any little irritation between you. I cannot—I ought not, to encourage you to tell me connubial secrets—but tell me, at least, if I can be useful to you?"

Mrs. Forester burst into a violent flood of tears, and, at last, said, "I have nothing to complain of—only Gen. Forester is so jealous, and so violent, in his temper, I am afraid of him."

"Are you sure you never give him occasion for that jealousy?"

The sobs were louder, and more frequent.

"I know I am doing an ungrateful office, but I have been interested in you from your birth, and loved you, for your mother's sake, as well as your own. I cannot see you ruining your own happiness, and remain a silent spectator. Tell me, honestly, have you not encouraged young men to follow you more than a married woman, and one who loves her husband, should do? You know the London world last year talked of Mr. Singleton's constant attentions to you, and now the same things are said of Captain ——"

Mrs. Forester gave a convulsive start, and hid her face with her hands.

"If I am wrong, tell me ; no one will more strenuously defend you than I will."

A long silence ensued ; at last Miss Shirley took the hand of her companion between her's, and said,

"Julia, forgive me, if I have given you pain ; but let what I am going to say sink deep into your heart. A woman, who, on any pretence, estranges her affections from her husband, and, in any coolness between them, suffers another man to whisper consolation in her ear, has taken the first step towards the greatest and most fatal error — she has opened a path that may (imperceptibly) lead her to vice and misery. Pause on the threshold ! and seek, at once shelter ; (whilst it may be obtained,) in that bosom, which is not yet shut to your influence, but soon may : think of the misery—the wretchedness, one false step may bring on your helpless children, and all your family—your husband's jealousy is a proof of his love for you : push this the least atom too far, he feels his honour implicated ; his blood, or that of his rival in your affections, for such are the laws of honour, of (*unchristian*) honour, must be spilt. You become a dishonoured wife, and an outcast of society. Reflect, also, that the man on whom you are preparing to inflict dishonour is the husband of your choice—the father of your children—one, to

whom, in the sight of God and man, you have solemnly vowed to love, honour, and obey. Do you think, broken vows are not registered in heaven ; Are they, can you imagine, not punished by Him whose laws you will have broken ? And will He not, think you, visit, even in this world, his wrath on your head ? Recollect, that to bear, and forbear, are the great secrets of domestic happiness—bear with the inequalities of your husband's temper, and he will learn of you to bear the caprice of your's.”

Miss Shirley was, herself, overcome by the arduous painful task she had, voluntarily, taken on herself ; and was glad to leave her companion to reflect on the awful truths she had placed before her view.

When they arrived at Marchwood, they found Mrs. Villiars really ill, and obliged to keep her room ; and, early in the evening, Mrs. Forester made the excuse of feeling unwell also ; and, requiring repose, retired after tea.

Miss Neville and Miss Shirley passed the evening tête à tête. They had much to talk over, as respected the happy prospects of the former ; and the latter could not help communicating her observations on the meeting between General and Mrs. Forester, and adding, that the coldness appeared most appa-

rent on *her* part; but expressed a benevolent wish that a little judicious interference might set all o rights. Though she could not help expressing her regret, that with every earthly good, poor Mrs. Villiars's daughter, from over indulgence, and in-judicious fondness, should be running headlong on misery.

Miss Neville acquiesced in this opinion, adding, that she had learned, from Colonel Wetheral, that all Mr. Villiars's friends dissuaded him from his rash, attempt; they suspected neither himself, nor his horse, were equal to the undertaking: but, with many good qualities, and those of a description to endear him to his comrades, he was headstrong and self-willed, in no common degree.

Mrs. Forester appeared at breakfast the following morning, and seemed anxious to show Miss Shirley that she was not unhappy beyond the grief at the loss of her brother: she talked of her husband and her daughter; the latter with some anxiety. She enquired, eagerly, if there were no letters for her?

The butler said none, and she seemed much disappointed; but, as the party were preparing to separate after they had finished breakfast, he returned, saying,

"A man had just brought the letter which he held in his hand, and demanded fifteen shillings for bringing it, alledging it came from the sea-coast, had been landed by a man-of-war boat, given to him and he was assured, if he delivered it safe, he would be rewarded: and he had walked more than an hundred miles from Poole, in Dorsetshire."

All this seemed an improbable story, and to savour much of imposition; and Wilson ventured to say,

"I believe all is a cheat, but you will do as you please, madam."

With a trembling hand, Mrs. Forester turned over the letter, looked at the hand-writing, and the seal, as if they were strange to her, and then said,

"I believe I know where it comes from; you had better pay the man, Wilson, or tell my man to pay him, and send him away: I dare say half he says is not true; but I believe the letter is for me."

Miss Shirley could not but witness all this with an anxious, and with a discerning, eye.

But Mrs. Forester did not open the letter till she reached her own dressing room, nor did she appear again till dinner time, when she put a small slip of paper

into Miss Shirley's hand, on which was written, in pensel,

"Your council shall not be lost on me; don't despise me; I will make myself worthy of your interest."

With the contents of this extraordinary letter, we must make our readers acquainted, though Miss Shirley was not.

It was from Captain — ; he said, his dispatches, when opened, ordered him, first, to Lisbon, and then on the Mediterranean station, for three years. That, of course, their friendship, for such he called it, must cease; but he hoped, he should, occasionally hear of her health and happiness. It plainly showed he had never intended to commit himself, however he might be inclined to take advantage of her weakness, as contributing to his amusement.

There was one piece of resolution, Mrs. Forester felt reluctant to practice, that was, burning Captain — letters and notes, yet she doubted not how much it was her duty to do so.

Mrs. Villiars still kept her room, and perhaps when the mind is deeply wounded, it is advantageous that the body feels; we are drawn off from mental afflictions by physical suffering.

Mrs. Forester spent part of the evening *tête à trois*

with Miss Shirley and Miss Neville ; some accidental circumstance, or observation, turned the conversation on resolution, on what people could do, or submit to, if they really made up their minds to it ; and how necessary such resolution was, how dearly we often paid for vacillation : it was mere general conversation, but in such, sparks are often elicited that come home to the heart.

Mrs. Forester had begun to think seriously of her own situation, she was following a shadow, and losing a substance ; she knew enough of the world to be sensible that in forfeiting her present situation, her husband's claims would come in upon her recently acquired property ; but luckily she had no choice, her lover had very coolly given her up, and why should she cling to his shadow ? why not commit to the flames his letters, his little *cadeaux* ; if there was a little pique in all this, we must not too greatly blame her, we sometimes act well, when the motives are not quite so pure as they ought to be, but the action may sanctify them.

On her return to her room, she made the sacrifice ; she hid her eyes whilst the flames consumed the, almost guilty, emblems ; but she laid her head with unusual tranquillity on her pillow when it was over.

The next day, General Forester arrived to dinner,

and Miss Shirley beheld with undisguised delight his wife's reception of him, she threw her arms round his neck, and he warmly returned her caresses, by pressing her repeatedly to his bosom.

The funeral was a very private one, early in the morning, and attended by General Forester, Colonel Wetheral, the Regimental Surgeon, and Mrs. Villiars's man-of-business.

The interesting dog, of whom mention has been made, would not be detached from the remains of his master; whilst they continued on the bed, he kept his post there; when removed to the coffin, close to that lay the dog also; and when that was again removed to the burial place, *Chance* followed, with the most dejected eye, and his tail drooping between his legs; when the ceremony was over, a great coat was suddenly thrown over the dog, and he was conveyed to Marchwood, and shut up, but he found means to escape by a window, and was found next morning by the side of the grave; there he was suffered to remain, and food was taken every day to him, but little of it was touched, and, on the third day, the servant who was employed to feed him, found him stretched, lifeless, on the grave of his master. He was buried in Mrs. Villiars's garden, with the following tablet:

To the memory of
CHANGI,
A favourite spaniel of Captain Villiars,
A victim of affection to his late master.

As, after such melancholy scenes, change of place is beneficial to relieve the mind, the necessity of General and Mrs. Forester's visiting their newly-acquired property, in Gloucester hire, made them propose a journey to Mrs. Villiars, but "the wealth of worlds," she said, "would not tempt her to Elstree."

No wish was expressed that she should have that painful trial; but why would she not go to Cheltenham, whilst her daughter and General Forester attended their business; she would find there her friend Mrs. Cornish, and her niece would accompany her; this was agreed to, it was also determined that the marriage of Colonel Wetheral and Miss Neville should take place at Cheltenham.

Miss Shirley promised to bring her niece down to attend the ceremony, whenever called on; and she returned to town, to make some necessary arrangements, as she intended, when he had been at Cheltenham, to go on to Lady Worthley's, at Wedglock Park.

CHAPTER VIII.

EMILY SHIRLEY was delighted at having her sister to share her apartment—they had not met very often since she had resided with her aunt Beaumont; and there was, just at this moment, a fertile source of amusement in Miss Briggs and her lover.

It could not be supposed that Emily was very fond of Miss Briggs, or she of a niece of Mrs. Beaumont's; both had entertained some little jealousy and distrust of each other; the feeling was much stronger on the part of Miss Briggs, though more carefully hid. Emily's chief dislike was from being prevented shewing those little attentions to her aunt, a naturally grateful heart prompted her to do, they were always interrupted by Miss Briggs saying,

"My dear, let me do so and so, I must know best what your aunt likes."

But the scene was changed, Miss Briggs was about to become, as she hoped, an independent, and in her own opinion, a *great* lady; she could afford now to patronize, rather than deprecate.

Men of Mr. Van Tulip's age have not those delicate feelings that belong to younger men, they know their own value, measuring it by the length of their purse; and yet none are so easily flattered as they are, whether widowers or old bachelors.

Miss Briggs played her part admirably; found out all his weak points, and by well timed, though sometimes a little exaggerated, admiration of his house, his pictures, his flowers, and his child, found her way to his heart, or rather, we should say, to his imagination, for his heart was a tough sort of substance; and in a few interviews he ventured to implore her to become the mistress of all she admired. His proposal was liberal, even ostentatious; of course it was readily accepted—her little portion sold out of the funds, and about to be dispersed amongst the most fashionable milliners and dress-makers.

She was herself grown very important; always talking of the Regent's Park, as if it was next door to heaven. All these matrimonial airs were subjects

of mirth to the two sisters, in which Count St. Ange sometimes joined.

Mrs. Beaumont, afraid of marring the thing, preserved her gravity on all occasions ; indeed sometimes she felt a pang at losing one who had for some years studied her comforts and happiness ; but she rejected those selfish feelings ; she thought it not quite impossible she might detain Emily, who she believed had not any great inclination for India, though she had never heard her say so.

Perhaps there was another small circumstance that might operate on her mind ; matrimony, like a fever, was said to be infectious ; a certain Lord Squandemoor, who had been one of her Florence acquaintances, was often in her box at the Opera, or by the side of her carriage in the Park—he was said to be a man of large fortune—people are apt to fancy they are liked for themselves—it did not occur to Mrs. Beaumont that Lord Squandemoor's fortune might be run out, or encumbered, and that therefore her's might be an object to him—what we know ourselves we fancy every one else knows. She concluded every body must know the cruel clause in her late husband's will—in this case she judged wrong, but whilst the error lasted, she acted upon it, was more reconciled than she would otherwise have been to

Count St. Ange's attentions to Emily, and to Miss Briggs's marriage.

All the important things with which Miss Briggs's attention was occupied, did not divert her from her promise to Miss Cummings of the chemical dinner, though from some accidental circumstance, it had been of necessity postponed a week, but the same party were still to partake of it on the following Thursday—and this was the Tuesday preceding, on which Caroline Shirley became a resident in Stanhope-street.

Mrs. Beaumont had now a box at the Opera two nights a week, this was one of them, and to it came Lord Squandernoor, Count St. Ange, Mr. Van Tulip, and others.

The ballet was excellent, and the whole party had their respective gratifications, a little supper followed, to which the above named beaux were invited; and Miss Briggs, and her future, afforded ample amusement to the party.

On the following morning, whilst Miss Briggs was out, looking after her *trousseau*, the groom of the chambers came to Mrs. Beaumont to say that Richardson, her cook, who, in the absence of Dupuis, was high in power, begged to speak to her directly on something very urgent. For some days previously this woman had been receiving instructions for the

proposed dinner, as Mrs. Beaumont had arranged that Miss Briggs and her friend were to be indulged in their whim ; but that there was also to be a dinner of a different description, for those whose tastes did not lead them to patronise acids and alkalies.

Richardson was ordered into the back drawing-room, and, when she entered, her mistress doubted for a moment if she was *sane*, or *sober*, she was in tears, and wringing her hands.

“ Well, Richardson, what is the matter ; has old Forester disappointed you of the venison ?”

“ Oh, no, madam ; far—far worse. I have lived with you ever since I was a child ; I was born on your estate ; but I must—I must leave your service this very hour, I am a ruined, undone woman.”

“ What can you mean,” said Mrs. Beaumont, “ has any accident happened, tell me at once ; I will try to repair, and forgive it, I know you have always been faithful and just to me.”

“ I hope so, madam, but that I should live to see this wretched day !” and she sobbed violently.

“ Why will you not tell me what has happened ?”

The poor woman tried to repress her sobs, and then said,

“ You know, madam, to-morrow is to be that

great *comical* dinner you are to give ; I have tried all I could to learn some of Madame Cummings's queer ways of dressing things, and I just thought it would be as well to practice a little first ; so I tried at her soup to-day, for the hall. Oh, that I had never heard of such a *comical* soup ; most of the servants tasted it, and they all declare I have poisoned them : for Joe is gone to fetch a policeman, and I shall be dragged to prison."

Here a fresh burst of grief came.

"This," Mrs. Beaumont thought, "must be insanity, but said, "Oh ! don't be alarmed ; I will protect you!"

"You cannot, madam, for if you save me from going to Bow-street, and to prison, you cannot recover my character. It is on my cooking my bread depends ; I shall be hooted through the streets, as 'the woman who poisoned her fellow-servants.' Nobody will hire me with such a stain on my character. Oh ! in pity, let me go away directly, and down to mother's ; she will shelter me."

It was vain to argue with a person in such a paroxysm of grief : Mrs. Beaumont therefore promised her she should go, as she desired, but said,

"I will talk to Miss Briggs about it."

"Oh ! no, ma'am, pray, pray don't consult her,

she is just wild about her *comical* dinner ; I shall get no pity from her."

" Well, then, I will not ; but I will see you, and settle with you, by and bye."

Richardson opened the door to go, when there was a push made by all the other servants, who were assembled round it, and they pressed on one another to come in ; the maids in the foremost rank. Mrs. Beaumont was half frightened ; but, seeing all her household, she called Ferdinando, and her own maid, Fletcher, to come forward and explain the matter : the latter, on being asked what she had to complain of, in a mincing way, said,

" Oh, nothing particular ; indeed, I did not eat of the soup, and I don't know there was any harm in it."

" You," exclaimed a stout laundry maid, who was sobbing, and pushing herself forward, " you, Mrs. Fletcher, knows nothing about poisoning ; but I do's, for I had an aunt and two cousins poisoned with arsenic ; and I knows, to a certainty, I am as good as a dead woman."

" I think," said her mistress, who began now almost to think the thing ridiculous, " you look much better than a dead woman, for you appear to me to be in perfect health."

"That's no rule, madam; when one has taken poison, one may be well one minute and dead the next; but if I die, Mrs. Richardson shall hang for it; I will go and inform against her at Bow-street, or my name's not Rachel Gubbins."

Foreseeing no end to this poor woman's violence, Mrs. Beaumont said, "Ferdinando, you understand cooking. What do you say to all this?"

The man screwed up his mouth to prevent a laugh. "Madam, I tasted *ce bouillè*, it was *soup maigre, passablement bon*. I have very, very often tasted much worse; I know well those would think it good."

At this, Mrs. Richardson, who had retreated to a corner of the room, clapped her hands in joy.

"Thank you! thank you! good Mr. Ferdinando!"

But the unappeasable laundry-maid still looked daggers.

"I believe," said Mrs. Beaumont, "the best thing is to send for a chemist to analyze the soup before you all; and call in a policeman to hear his report."

This seemed a little to pacify the angry parties, and they withdrew.

When returned to her nieces, Mrs. Beaumont laughed heartily ; but they intreated that Miss Briggs might not know the whole affair ; but only that her famous soup would bring a chemist and a policeman into the house, deprive Mrs. Beaumont of half her establishment, and perhaps oblige her to defend her cook in a criminal suit, brought against her by the laundry maid.

Miss Briggs returned in the highest glee from her morning expedition, quite flushed with success and pleasure ; she had been to meet Mr. Van Tulip at Hamlet's, to choose a few additional articles of plate, and he had presented her with the beautiful set of ornaments, necklace, ear-rings, brooch, bracelets, and *sevigné*, of carbuncles, she held in her hand ; and was so eager to display that she would neither listen to anything Mrs. Beaumont had to say, nor observe the sly glances between the sisters.

" But why, Willy, did you choose carbuncles ? " said Mrs. Beaumont, " when turquoises or aqua-maries are so much prettier ; so much more subduing to the complexion."

Miss Briggs's heightened at the observation.

" Because they were more to the taste of dear Mr. Van Tulip ; he thought them more shewy ; and gave more effect for the money, than quieter jewels."

"An admirable reason, and one quite in character with your Intended."

"Well, and what other pretty things have you been purchasing?" said Emily.

"Oh, many more than I can tell you; we, or I should rather still say, Mr. Van Tulip, bought an *epargne*, and some dancing figures, for the table, to hold lights; those were entirely *my* choice, and I assure you they were quite classic, and *vrai antique*."

"Cupid and Psyche, and Venus and Adonis, I dare say," said Mrs. Beaumont, "most appropriate, but as we are likely to see all these beauties, as well as your caps and bonnets, suppose for a moment you listen to *my* tale of what has happened in your absence, and the difficulties you have drawn me into, nothing less than being involved with a police office, and a law suit to boot, and all to please *you*! All my servants, even my good Richardson, your favourite, going to leave me at an hour's notice, fancying that they are poisoned by some chemical experiments; and who knows, but when your dear Van Tulip hears of your exploits, he may withdraw also, from the same apprehension, and all these beautiful carbuncles to be returned!"

Poor Miss Briggs changed colour repeatedly during

this *exposé*, and at last burst into tears, and at the same moment, without being aware of the effects on Miss Briggs, Caroline and Emily burst into a violent fit of laughter ; the matter was soon explained, and Mrs. Beaumont told her friend, that she must insist on her drawing her out of the scrape of the *comical* dinner, as Richardson had not unaptly called it.

But their attention was called to the chemical experiments of the professor just arrived. Mrs. Beaumont ordered all her household to be assembled in the dining-room, and the policeman, also, as a witness ; all crowded round the table to see what they considered the hocus pocus of art, the soup was analyzed, reduced to good veal broth, almost jelly ; a quantity of alkali precipitated, which they were all desired to taste, the chemist setting the example ; there was an evident reluctance to do this, though Mrs. Beaumont, her nieces, and Miss Briggs tasted it ; an acid was extracted, and a portion of salt and rice, all equally tasted by most of the servants, excepting Rachel Gubbins, who declared the white powder *was* arsenic, and no power could make her think otherwise ; she was accordingly discharged from Mrs. Beaumont's service, and in case she put her threat of swearing her life against Richardson, the chemist, and the policeman, were engaged to appear as witnesses in defence of the cook.

When the ladies returned to the drawing-room, Mrs. Beaumont, said,

“ I hope tranquillity now is restored in my domestic establishment, I shall hear no more of such silly experiments, and that to-morrow we shall eat a good rational dinner.”

“ Oh, my dear friend ! ” said Miss Briggs, “ but how are we to satisfy good Miss Cummings, whose whole heart has been so set on this realization of all the fruits of her laborious experiments ? ”

“ I cannot help Miss Cumming’s mortification, well deserved mortification, I may say.”

“ Oh, but you know not what a sensitive person she is, nor how exquisite are the feelings of all scientific people ; don’t you remember hearing that when Dr. Clark went by appointment to inform Sir Humphrey Davy of his success in turning a diamond into charcoal, and being told that Sir Humphrey had gone out early on a fishing party, and did not return till night, he would not believe the servant, nor could prevail on himself to leave the door. “ What, go out fishing when a diamond was to be turned into charcoal ! ” and the mortification remained to Dr. Clark’s last hour. Think what we, or rather you, Mrs. Beaumont, may have to answer for, perhaps, a paralytic stroke to good Miss Cummings.”

"That I should be very sorry for, but servants now are people we cannot control, nor command, I should not wonder, if not one of mine would wait on Miss Cummings, if she dines here ; I am sure Richardson will not dress any one of her dishes, if I bribed her ever so ; cannot you put her off, or, at the least, let her dine with us in a common way ? take the carriage, it is at the door, do your best, there's a good soul ! I know your powers of persuasion, you have often tried them on me, and pretty generally succeeded, have you not, Willy dear ?"

A little coaxing, and a little flattery, were never lost on Miss Briggs, especially in her present state of excitement, and as she seated herself in the carriage, she mentally said, "I wonder what will become of poor Mrs. Beaumont when I leave her; she is the most helpless creature on earth, and I am sure Emily Shirley will never supply my placee; perhaps Caroline may have more tact, but this I do not know; but kind as my friend has been to me, it could never be expected that I should forego my own advantage, and such a brilliant position too! How lucky my amiable friend did not select one of those girls, for men of a certain age have often a strange fancy for marrying girls young enough to be their daughters, I ought to consider dear Mr. Van Tulip's selection a great mark of discretion and judgment."

These reflections brought her to Miss Cumming's lodging in Green-street. Her visit was rather a long one; she found the good lady rather impracticable, and inclined to think herself very ill used, and Mrs. Beaumont a very silly woman, for giving way to her servants, having herself only a Scotch woman who called herself "of her blood," who had "done for her," for thirty years, and done much as she pleased ; she could have no idea of the difficulty of keeping a large establishment together.

Miss Briggs returned to report progress, ' had never had a more difficult task before, poor Miss Cummings was in utter despair, had never been so cruelly disappointed in her life, had no idea what English servants were, and if they were all like Mrs. Beaumont's, hoped she never should ; Scotch domestics would lay down their lives for you, and she could hardly refrain from commenting on what she considered a great weakness in giving way to such folks.' However, Miss Briggs compromised the matter.

Mrs. Beaumont though thought no compromise was necessary, and felt any one who did not like her dinners, which were always of the first order, might decline the invitation, not considering that when a person is mounted on a hobby-horse, they are apt to fancy it Pegasus, and gallop it too far.

The compromise was, that Miss Cummings should be allowed to dress three dishes her own way, and at her own apartment, and that they should be conveyed by Mrs. Beaumont's carriage and servants, and served up with the rest of the dinner, and decided on by the company, they were to be a *soup*, a *salad*, and a *cream*.

Mrs. Beaumont and her nieces laughed at the arrangement, and if they did not intend to taste of the dishes, they felt pretty sure they should make some amusement out of the Scotch chemist, as well as out of Miss Briggs and her lover.

We believe this long proposed and choice party has been already enumerated: but as our readers may have parties of their own to recollect, ours may have slipped their memories: a principal lioness, yclept, Mad. Delphine Gay, disappointed them, but there was luckily Caroline to fill up the place at the table. Miss Talbot, Miss Cummings, Miss Briggs, the hostess and her nieces, were the six ladies; Dr. Marvel, Mr. Fleming, Mr. Van Tulip, Mr. Crayon, Mr. Greffier, and Count St. Ange.

The latter of course, from his rank, was at Mrs. Beaumont's right hand, and *par excellence*, Mr. Van Tulip at her left; this was not quite as it should be, for Miss Briggs, from her position in the family, came in the middle, quite away from her lover, and the two

young ladies were on each side Mr. Crayon, at the bottom of the table.

There is really sometimes as much generalship required in marshalling a dinner party, as an army; it is no bad fashion, though a foreign one, of putting each person's name in their plate, and trusting to the butler for directing them to it; but it is difficult to do those things in England, young men are so tiresome, and will only sit where they like, that is, *by* whom they like; and young ladies are a little apt to manoeuvre on such occasions; but in this case, there were no beaux to excite, and the young ladies were placed beside one as well able to amuse them with his conversation, as with his pencil.

At each end of the table was soup, mullacatawny, and chemical; Miss Briggs eagerly, as the servants were helping out of each tureen, intreated Miss Cummings's soup might be taken first; the servants, who having had their taste of the soup the day before, thought it a capital joke that their betters should take a chance of being poisoned also; without the least heeding the negative nods every one gave, as they approached, in a moment had served the tempting mess before all; it was as white as milk, and about as thin as that served in the streets of London.

Miss Cummings, of course, began eagerly on her

portion, and Miss Briggs tried to follow her example ; the rest took it more daintily, and made such strange faces at half a spoonful, that our friend Crayon could hardly forbear taking out his pencil, and sketching them.

" Is it not excellent ?" said Miss Briggs to Mr. Van Tulip ?"

" Why," replied he, " I may venture to differ from you, I should have taken it for lime-water mixed with milk."

Poor Miss Briggs coloured up to her very ears, and the soup maker looked what school boys call "*properly cross* ;" the servants readily took the hint, supplied the place of this cholera mixture with its antidote. Champagne went round, all went on well till salad was proposed, with some sort of *roti*. Mrs. Beaumont had given strict orders that Miss Cummings's salad should *not* be handed round ; but the servants were either inclined to revenge, or it was accidental that the wrong salad was removed : none helped to this, attempted a second mouthful. It has been said of salad, that in it, sour, sugar, and saltiness *agree* ; in this wonderfully tempered one, every ingredient so counteracted another, that nothing predominated, saving a sort of soda-ish taste ; but it was removed without exciting so much disgust as the soup ; in

the second course was the cream, that looked tempting, and several of the party were induced to try it.

“What is it like?” said Miss Talbot to Count St. Ange.

“Very much like what we do *shave* with.”

This was the climax for the experimental lady, and, however inwardly she might despise the taste of those unused to haggis, and cock-a-leeky, she bore the thing tolerably; with a decided feeling, that those only who were used to, and appreciated Scotch cookery, were worthy of a dinner dressed on pure chemical principles.

A London dinner is too dull to describe; and as Miss Cummings went away early, Mr. Crayon ventured to make a capital drawing of *alkali* soup, from which sketch we hope to see a picture in the next exhibition in Suffolk-street.

Miss Talbot had a great deal to communicate respecting the INTELLECTUANA, on the subject of which Mr. Flemming joked her a good deal, calling it the literary nunnery, and asserting he had heard that nothing of the masculine gender were to approach it, even the porter was to be a porter-ess, and to wear a sort of livery.

She gave the retort courteous, and advised him, and his sex, to look about them, for that the Edinburgh Review, the Athenæum, and the New Monthly

Magazine, were all at this moment advocating the *intellectual* powers of women, and maintaining they were only restrained, by the tyranny of man, from obtaining their due preponderance in the kingdom of mind.

This he could not deny, he only hoped the vanity for which the fair sex were now distinguished would not overturn their present brilliant prospects.

Miss Talbot contended that women were not more distinguished for vanity than men, only they were directed to apparently lower requirements, but hinted that even in the despised article of dress, their tailors and boot-makers would answer for the fastidiousness of their customers ; and added,

“ You know you excluded us from all your scientific meetings, is it not fair that we should exclude you from ours, which are to be devoted to *les Belles Lettres* ? ”

This could not be denied, and Dr. Marvel, who joined in the conversation, hoped that this clash of interests would lead to a better order of things, and to mutual improvement, adding, “ there are many bright ideas flash across a female mind, that may lead to important results.”

Fortunately, often, for those who partake of them, a London dinner is not an interminable thing,

most of the company have other engagements for the evening, and break up after coffee; on the occasion we are describing, Miss Cummings retired early in disgust; Miss Talbot had a party at which she was to join her mother; Mrs. Beaumont proposed that she, her niece, and Count St. Ange should go to the Opera, they would come in for the ballet, and it was a favourite Opera on that night; Dr. Marvel and Mr. Flemming had some society to attend, and Mr. Crayon, an engagement, Mrs. Beaumont made no scruple to leave Mr. Van. Tulip and Miss Briggs to each other's society, as they were so soon to be one bone and one flesh; they appeared very happy, diligently studying a book of prints, which Mr. Crayon perceived they were turning over wrong end upwards.

At the Opera Mrs. Beaumont had many visitors, amongst them Lord Squandermoor was conspicuous, but he declined her invitation to sup, he was obliged to go to Brooks's, but she returned home in great spirits.

Before the day arrived which was to make Miss Briggs the mistress of a villa in the Regent's Park, Caroline received a summons from her aunt Shirley to go with her to Cheltenham, as she heard a very uncomfortable account of Mrs. Villiers's health; but kindly offering to dispense with her company, if

she wished to remain in Stanhope-street ; this she did not, Miss Briggs's wedding was a matter of no interest to her ; and she did not want to give her aunt Beaumont the additional trouble of sending to Paris for a bride's-maid dress, like her sister's.

All young ladies of that age have not so much consideration and forbearance !

It was a subject of great mortification to Miss Briggs that she could not have favours, as they are not usual on a second marriage ; she had amused herself with fancying some favours of a very novel kind, and had one made, but the others were countermanded ; this, in a glass case, would make a very pretty ornament for a table.

The important day at last arrived ; the usual bridal dress of white satin and Brussels lace is so common it was not to be thought of. Mrs. Beaumont gave the wedding dress, and sent to Paris for it : it was a white cashmere, embroidered *en colonne*, with a rich pattern in white silk, and a large pelerine of the same material and work.

Mrs. Beaumont had one of the same description in pale blue for herself, and in pale pink for her niece, and the curate of St George's, a very young man, of very good taste, and some fashion, avowed,

“ He had never seen a more beautiful costume for a bride, and her bride's-maid.”

Mrs. Beaumont's man-of-business, Mr. Leasum, was asked to give Miss Briggs away, and appeared highly gratified by the employment.

After the ceremony, Mrs. Beaumont gave a breakfast to Mrs. Briggs's particular friends, Miss Jenkins, Miss Cummings, and others we need not enumerate, the bride changed her beautiful gown, and a bonnet and feathers from Herbeault, for a travelling dress, and, *selon le regle*, set off as soon as breakfast was over on a tour to the Lakes of Cumberland.

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. Beaumont had talked of going into Warwickshire as soon as this important event was over, but an indescribable something kept her lingering in town ; *business*, which never occurs, sometimes forms a good excuse on such occasions ; but besides this, she did not feel quite well, and wished to be near advice, and for the former reason she took a house at Richmond, on the banks of the Thames, for a fortnight ; going on the water, and riding in those beautiful environs, might do her good.

Lord Squandemoor took up his abode, as he often did, at the Star and Garter, on Richmond Hill, whether Count St. Ange followed him. Mrs. Beaumont had, on this same plea of health, sent for her own

riding horses from Beaumont Abbey, and one also that she used to ride, for her niece.

Nothing could be more delicious than their *séjour* at Richmond ; their mornings were spent in riding in Richmond and Bushey parks, and their evenings on the water, it was a sweet remembrance of the Bay of Naples, and all the party enjoyed the recollection ; they were joined in their aquatic excursions, and at a supper that followed them, by Lord Squandermoor and Count St. Ange, and several of Mrs. Beaumont's friends, whom she accidentally found in the neighbourhood.

It was not "lazy footed time ;" "days flew on zephyr's wings ;" but in the midst of this dream of enjoyment, it occurred to her, and why it had not occurred before seemed surprising, that her niece might be nursing an attachment to Count St. Ange that might undermine her future happiness ; she had never liked to come to the point before, because the Count was so even in his attentions to her, and Emily : her own vanity was flattered, she did not like to break the spell, and be *certain* that she was not herself the object he was pursuing ; she had exactly ascertained his position from the Misses Du Burgs, he was the third son of the Marquis de St. Ange, his elder brother had fallen in the Austrian service ; his

second, now the heir, was a Knight of Malta, and consequently could not marry. Count Ernest St. Ange, as he properly was, therefore, was the heir of the house, but of its wealth he possessed none.

It is a very erroneous notion, that because a man has a large fortune, that he necessarily will provide handsomely for a younger son on his marriage; on the contrary, those are generally the persons least disposed to be liberal and generous.

One evening, as Mrs. Beaumont's party were landing at the stairs which led to her garden, the boat slipped from its hold, and Emily missed her step, and fell in an uncomfortable way between the boat and the stairs, the Count was handing her out, but he could not save her fall, he exclaimed,

“*Mon Ange, etez vous blessé?*”

There was an awkward sound in the word *ange* that, together, with the tone of anxiety in which it was said, struck harshly on Mrs. Beaumont's ear, and determined her to come to some explanation with the Count; his position as it regarded herself, was occupied by Lord Squandermoor, and therefore she felt the less reluctant to plunge into the business.

Count St. Ange called the next day to enquire after Emily, she was not *visible*, and suffering from a sprained ankle; the sorrow the Count expressed at

the accident, and the blame with which he reproached himself for not preventing it, gave Mrs. Beaumont an opportunity of saying,

“ My niece is very fortunate in exciting so large a share of your sympathy, Count, but as I claim a sort of natural right to be her guardian now she is under my care, and so far removed from that of her father, you must pardon me in saying that *les usages de société* in England, do not allow of a very young woman receiving the devoted attention you are pleased to bestow on Emily, unless something more is meant than the amusement of the moment; I am quite aware of the license of other countries, but I am compelled, unwillingly compelled, to say that if your attentions have no reference beyond the present moment, they cannot be continued without injury to my niece; and allow me to say, with disgrace to yourself, I am obliged therefore to be explicit with you.”

The Count’s countenance had undergone various changes during the speech; at the conclusion of it he fetched the deepest sigh, but he spoke not.

“ I should,” said Mrs. Beaumont, “ much as I like Savoy, be sorry to part with my niece so far, but that does not rest with *me*, she has a father in India, to whom reference must be made, and who, I have

reason to believe, has, from his situation, very advantageous views for her."

The unfortunate person she was addressing, by this time recovered a little self-possession, and said,

" My own situation is a very peculiar one ; I am, the only heir to a long line of ancestors, and to noble possessions ; but, alas ! I have nothing but a very small allowance, one hardly adequate to my living in England *en garçon*. I can do nothing—I love your niece, madame, *au distraction* ; perhaps if she was irrevocably mine, my father, though he is a stern, severe, man, might be captivated by the charms of Mademoiselle Emily, and forgive——."

" Oh !" exclaimed Mrs. Beaumont, " that is a contingency we John Bulls cannot depend on, and especially for one whose prospects are so good in the East. I fear your attentions have been too acceptable to Emily, and I blame myself, now, for having been blind to their consequences ; but, my most amiable Count, you must allow me to be prudent at last, and recommend *you* to take a little trip to some other place as wide of Richmond as possible, and leave me to settle the point with Emily."

" Alas ! madam," said the Count, " I have too long dreaded this *eclaircissement*, I have nothing to say to controvert it, I only take away a *broken heart* ;

of that, may I hope, you will assure *la charmante* Mad. Emily? I have no home, *le chateau de mon pere* is not one of happiness to me; when dismissed from your hospitable roof, from the society of you, and your niece, I go to a long contemplated destiny, to join the glorious cause of the Greeks in their struggle for liberty, till I am called, if I should survive, to the same occupation nearer my own paternal domain."

The turn of his voice so overcame Mrs. Beaumont, she could not speak; he got up, took her hand and pressed it to his lips, adding,

" May I not say Adieu to Mad. Emily."

" It is far better not," replied Mrs. Beaumont.

And she felt herself anxious to put an end to this tender scene.

The Count reiterated his thanks for all the kindness Mrs. Beaumont had shown him, his eyes filled with tears, and he made his final bow.

Mrs. Beaumont for a moment felt herself overcome by the loss of one whose constant attentions she had been so long used to; it seemed a diminution of her own happiness, as if every thing she liked was receding from her; but there were the attentions, the marked attentions, of Lord Squandermoor to console her. But what was she to do with poor Emily; how

was she to break to her, that all her hopes were but 'the baseless fabric of a vision,' and had melted into empty air?

After a good deal of consideration, she thought it wisest not to enter into the whole explanation, but merely tell Emily, who had often heard the Count talk with the wildest enthusiasm of the Greek cause,

"That he was suddenly compelled to join it, had come to acquaint her with this event, regretted very much he could not also take his leave of her."

"My dear aunt," said Emily, "I could have come down, had I known the Count had been with you. Oh, how sorry, how very sorry I am, I did not see him, and for the last time."

Emily's voice faltered, she could say no more, but she valourously subdued her tears.

"My dear, I thought you were unable to come down, and it was impossible I could bring the Count *up* to you; and besides, tender leave-takings are bad things, you know; the poor Count, for such I must call him, is very sentimental, and it would not have been *proper* you should have been so also; the Count is a most agreeable, amiable man, but you must have been aware he was only a sojourner in this country, and repaid the civilities he received by contributing to make the society he was in pleasant; it was grati-

tude in him for attentions he could no otherwise return. I trust he has never talked to *you* the love nonsense all foreigners live on, like their daily bread, but by which they mean nothing ; if you have seen his attentions in any other light, and have felt an interest in him, I shall reproach myself for not opening your eyes sooner, but it appeared to me such a self-evident thing, I thought it was not necessary."

Emily's countenance underwent various changes during this sapient speech, and her mind more.

"Why," said she, mentally, "did my aunt allow Count St. Ange to be always with me ? she *must* have seen his attachment, nay, she encouraged it towards herself; and Mrs. Van Tulip is very false, or my aunt considered herself the object of his regard. Surely it was very hard hearted not to call me down, just to see the last of him ; to convince myself that all his tenderness was mere *bardinage*. No! no! I will not think that his attachment to me was insincere, he might not have been able to make me an offer, he had a father, and a brother between him and the estate, he has often told me so; but I would have waited a more favourable time, if he had only explained himself. I wish I could believe that he came coolly here this morning, after what passed last night, and took his leave, and without wishing to see

me. Some trick has been played on me, but if he is gone, I will not shew how much I feel it, if my aunt, which I am loath to believe, has been tampering with us both, she shall not have the gratification of seeing how much it distresses me."

There is nothing like a good resolution to make the best of an event we cannot control ; even if there is a little pique in the mixture of our feelings, we must not on such occasions, too vigilantly scrutinize motives, if they lead us to act right. To think right, is the perfection of human nature ; but to perfection few attain.

In pursuance of her resolution, Emily appeared at dinner ; and summoned all her fortitude to withstand the raillery of Lord Squandermoor and Miss Talbot, who rode down to dinner, and was going back in the evening.

Emily only laughed off their pity, said, "she expected to hear most heroic deeds of the Count, and only wished she had been allowed to work him a scarf with an appropriate motto."

"Would you do so for me?" said Lord Squandermoor.

"Oh, no, I should think that presumption, I leave your scarf, my lord, to Miss Talbot, or,"—here she stopped.

"I never work," said Miss Talbot, "I have not the smallest idea into which hand I ought to take a needle; but who was your—or?"

"I do not know," cried Emily, "I did not think of any one just then: but our good Van Tulip had, she continued, the Briggs, but now she has another knight to serve."

Miss Talbot laughed violently at the idea of Mynheer Van Tulip in the character of a knight, but recommending Mrs. Beaumont to try her needle in the cause, mounted her horse, and cantered off.

The boat was announced; Mrs. Beaumont asked Emily if she was well enough to venture? she declined it;—she felt a little awkward at a *tête-à-tête* with Lord Squandermoor, and sent to a neighbour, Miss Vernon, to ask her to join the party, she was already gone on the water; Lord Squandermoor seemed resolute in not taking his leave, but with a footman in the stern of the boat, there could be no great impropriety, so she led the way.

It was a delicious night, the moon did not rise till near ten o'clock; but there was not a breath of air, nor any dew. It was quite an Italian night, and it exactly suited Lord Squandermoor's purpose, he spoke in French, to avoid the servant's understanding his conversation; he declared his passion

so forcibly, and appeared so generous, and disinterested in his proposals, that he was finally accepted; and before they landed it was settled that their respective men-of-business should meet, and consult about settlements.

Lord Squandermoor staid supper, and Emily thought she discovered a restraint, and a pre-occupation in her aunt's manner, and a confidence of success in his.

These observations took her from herself, for a short time; but when returned to solitude, and her pillow, she felt as young hearts do, when first their infant hopes are blighted, and when the painful fact rushes on their hearts, that all was not truth which they believed to be so; yet, in Emily's case, she still thought she had not had fair play,

The next morning she heard with surprise that they were to remove to town; Mrs. Beaumont saw Mr. Leasum, and gave him his instructions, and in a drive they took in the park, Lord Squandermoor not only rode by her side, but giving his horse to his groom, was admitted within; there were but few people to witness this, for London was grown very thin; but those who did see it, could have no doubt now how matters stood, and it was announced that night at Brookes's, by Colonel Fullerton, that Squan-

dermoor had at last secured the rich widow ; those who had accounts on their betting books against him, heard this with great pleasure. He dined quite *en famille* in Stanhope-street, and afterwards received the congratulations of his friends at Brookes's, who all pretty well knew the dilapidated state of his fortune, especially since the last Newmarket meeting.

He left Mrs. Beaumont with coronets and corona-tion robes glittering before her eyes ; she closed them on such bright visions, and opened them in the morning on the following billet :

Four o'clock, Tuesday morning.

“ Madam,

Circumstances, which I must leave my agent Truepenny to acquaint Mr. Leasum with, oblige me to set off immediately for the continent ; I leave England with a distracted mind, but filled with every wish for your happiness.

Yours, &c.

SQUANDERMOOR.”

“ Good God ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Beaumont, without being aware her maid was in the room, “ what can be the matter ; tell Thomas to go as quick as possible for Mr. Leasum, and let me dress directly. Before this was completed, or her servant could have got

half way to Lincoln's Inn, Mr. Leasum was announced as down stairs, she hurried to receive him; but your men-of-business have not very tender feelings, especially such as relate to *la belle passion*.

Mr. Leasum rubbed his hands, hemmed and hawed, said half a dozen times over, "Awkward business this, ma'am."

"For God's sake," said Mrs. Beaumont, "tell me what it is?"

"Why, ma'am," and he paused again, "those great lords are not always prime." And then he hesitated again.

Mrs. Beaumont, out of patience, said, "tell me the worst at once."

"Well, then, ma'am, Mr. Truepenny and I met, to consult settlements, as we received your's, and my lord's instructions to do; but on my saying that your jointure went away when you married, Mr. Truepenny stopped short—asked if my lord knew it; that I could not tell; he begged to go and consult him; I, on your behalf, stickled for no delay in coming to the point, so he went to a club, where he knew my lord was, told him, and returned to me, saying, the thing must be at an end; my lord was almost a ruined man, and could only have retrieved his estate, by living upon *your's*. I waited till long past my

usual hour of rest for his return, when he came, he said, *our business was at an end*, and my lord would write to you ; but he desired Truepenny, as he went home, to call at his house, and order his servant to prepare immediately for his setting off to the continent, as I understood this morning."

The slow, precise, business-like way in which Leasum had communicated this intelligence, gave Mrs. Beaumont time to rally her spirits, and she only said,

" It is well ! you, I know, always do your duty Leasum, in looking after my interest : Lord Squandermoor is a very agreeable man, but I have always had my doubts as to the state of his affairs ; and therefore I sent his man-of-business to you : of course I do not wish this affair to transpire."

" You may rely on my secrecy, madam, it is a part of our profession."

Before Mrs. Beaumont saw Emily, she smoothed her brow, and tried to deck her face in smiles ; but it would not do, there was something on it that told Emily all was not *couleur de rose* ; it would have been beyond human nature, at least the imperfection of it, if Emily had felt sorry that her aunt had received some mortification, after having wantonly inflicted so much on her ; first, by voluntarily shut-

ting her eyes to Count St. Ange's attentions, and then dismissing him without the smallest regard to the feelings of her niece, who felt sure her aunt was paying the price of her vanity and selfishness; and, though with an aching heart she obeyed the order to collect her things for packing up, as they were to be ready to set off for Beau mont Abbey on the following day, she, nevertheless, felt glad she was going to change the scene, there would be nothing there to remind her of the accomplished Count, and his villa on the Lago de Como, he so much, and so often, talked about.

We hope the impression made on Emily's heart was not a very deep one, perhaps the Count was more calculated to excite vanity, than to touch the heart.

To conceal chagrin is one step, and not a short one, towards conquering it

Mrs. Beaumont's plan, which had been some time formed, though it had from circumstances been delayed, was to make a trading voyage into Warwickshire, and visit several friends by the way, and give her servants time to remove, and be ready to receive her at the abbey; her first visit was to Sir Edward and Lady Laurel, he had married, for his first wife, a sister of Mr. Beaumont's mother, she had been long dead, and her place was filled up. Sir Edward

was appointed one of Mr. Beaumont's executors; but he declined to act, though he was kindly disposed towards his widow, and thought the restrictions his nephew had laid on his property rather hard; he had had two wives, and if the opportunity came, though he was very well satisfied now, he certainly would have a third. He was a good-humoured sort of jolly man, liked his house full; his family by his first wife were two sons, they had made their way in the world, and were only occasional visitors at their father's house; by his last lady he had no children, he lived at Beach Grove, near Stony Stratford, an easy distance from town for one who, like Mrs. Beaumont, disliked early rising; after her usual breakfast hour, four post horses, and the easiest and most perfectly *stuffed* carriage, whether as regarded cushions, or small parcels, for the accommodation of which the brains of coach-makers are ransacked in vain, for no sooner have they made a most ingenious contrivance for caps, but new invented writing cases or work-boxes, completely throw them out.

Mrs. Beaumont and her niece set off, and arrived about an hour before dinner, after what might be called a pleasant morning drive; they were hospitably received by Sir Edward and Lady Laurel, and on Mrs. Beaumont making some excuse for

bringing her niece, her uncle, as he called himself, assured her it made her doubly welcome, adding,

"I have got some beaux for you, Miss Shirley, who will be enchanted to see such fair additions to our party, but they were all set off on a fishing expedition, before I got Mrs. Beaumont's letter; and as they did not know the temptation, I fear they will not leave their sport till the last moment; but we will make them pay for their want of gallantry, they ought to have divined we were to have such belles; by the way, Mrs. Beaumont, one of my young men is *your* nephew as well as mine, Beaumont Hastings."

"I don't know Mr. Beaumont Hastings," she replied, "excepting by name, though I believe I may have seen him once or twice in his poor uncle's life time, but then he was a very little boy."

"And now he is a very fine young man, I assure you, and as keen a fisherman as any of his race; take care of *your* heart, Miss Shirley, though I need not caution you, for your aunt sets you the example, to the loss of my poor nephew."

Mrs. Beaumont coloured deeply, and did not look quite pleased.

"Well, well," said the good humoured old man, "I did not mean to touch on a painful subject, you good husband meant for the best, I dare say, as regard-

ed his property ; but I neither advised, nor could approve, of the restriction ; but we will talk no more about it ; you have been a great traveller since I saw you, I hope you liked your tour, I remember, I did living in Italy when I was a young man ; then going where you have been, was called the grand tour ; but now our young men are more enterprising ; they are not content to go, even where women can go by themselves, now they must explore Greece and Egypt. Aye, aye, we go on improving, I hope we shall not grow too wise.

Luckily, the first dinner-bell put an end to Sir Edward's conversation, he was a *grand parleur*, and too happy when he could meet with a patient ear.

When the second bell called the party to the drawing-room, Mrs. Beaumont and her niece found three young men and two ladies ; amongst the former, one was distinguished in person, tall, finely proportioned, approaching to the figure of the Apollo of Belvidere ; Sir Edward called him and introduced him to Mrs. Beaumont.

However people may be said to dislike their heir, especially if he is a collateral one, it was impossible a woman of Mrs. Beaumont's age could receive otherwise than graciously such a young man ; as he was making his bow to Emily, Sir Edward claimed

Mrs. Beaumont to conduct in-to dinner, and Emily was not a little pleased to fall to the care of Mr. Beaumont Hastings.

The other ladies were country neighbours, come, as was the fashion of the neighbourhood, to dine and sleep at Beach-grove ; they were two single ladies of an *uncertain* age, and women of some rank, and of pleasing manners.

The gentlemen were full of their admirable sport, trout fishing. Sir Edward had one of the finest trout streams in England running through his grounds, a part of the Ouse, and at about three miles from his house he had a fishing cottage, capable of accommodating a large party, even sleeping-rooms for bachelors. He had in his younger days had large and jolly parties there, of men, though they did not rival the fishing club in Hampshire, where the members did not allow themselves to be shaved more than once a week, that they might not be fit for society beyond their club, or tempted into it. The Beach grove sportsmen did not yield even to Sir Humphrey Davy in skill, and to no one in success ; a regular book had been kept for half a century of the number, and weight, of fish caught every season, and the name of the most successful fishers immortalized.

Sir Edward was too old to be a practical man, but he loved to go down to the river when his friends were enjoying their sport, give his opinion, and, "fight over again" his battles with a sixteen pounder of a trout.

There is nothing so catching as enthusiasm, even if it is only in field sports; and the ladies, hearing of the glories of the day, expressed a wish to witness some of these exploits; and it was proposed there should be an early dinner at the cottage next day, and if the ladies could not fish, they could go on the river.

The Misses Monson agreed to stay for 'it; the evening passed in work and cards, as it usually does in a country house, when the master and mistress are not young. Mr. Beaumont's nephew took care not to lose ground in the opinion of his young aunt.

At breakfast next morning, Sir Edward had the ladies to himself; the fishermen had gone out very early, to have the cool of the morning for their sport, and to be ready to devote themselves to the amusement of others afterwards.

When the party in Lady Laurel's barouche, after a drive of three miles, approached the river, Emily called out,

"Do, dear aunt, look at these extraordinary crea-

tures running about, they must be Chinese, they are entirely in white, with hats as large as umbrellas."

She was very much laughed at for not knowing the fishermen in their professional costume.

The dinner was most agreeable, and the fresh caught trout delicious, and after it the whole party went on the water, and staid till the dew obliged them to return home.

As Mrs. Beaumont was to go away the next morning, on taking leave at night, she gave her nephew a cordial invitation to the Abbey. Sir Edward was much pleased by this, and walking with her next morning round Lady Laurel's flower garden, he gave her some good advice respecting the management of her property, both as it regarded her own interest, and that of their nephew; and expressed so much pleasure at having brought them acquainted, that he quite won Mrs. Beaumont's heart by his genuine friendliness, and she felt glad she had paid a visit which she had only reluctantly agreed to as a matter of duty.

Her next visit was to General Harlow's, at Hanwell Park, near Banbury; but as she did not wish to arrive there too early in the day, she made a little *détour*, and crossed over to Oxford; she had not time to see the interior of any of the colleges, nor, as it

was vacation time, could she have commanded a *Cicerone*.

Good roads, a light carriage, and English post horses, carry over a good deal of ground in a short time, and Mrs. Beaumont arrived at her destination rather earlier than she intended, and was rather dismayed at seeing, as she drove past the stables, all the doors open, and the coach-houses empty, and feared her letter had not been received; but a servant who came to the door, assured her Mrs. Harlow was at home, and that she was expected.

The mistress of the house kindly welcomed her, and regretted she had not come earlier: "she had," she said, "her house so full she should not have been able to receive her, if her sister, Lady Linton, had not felt ill, and was gone for a few days to Oxford, to consult a physician there, and had left her apartment;" but added, "I can only give your niece the room adjoining yours, that my sister's maid occupied; but I hope I shall make amends by having a ball for you, Miss Shirley. It is Banbury races, and my family, and a large party that fill my house, are gone to them to day, and to night is the race ball."

Emily was delighted, the party at dinner was large, and most of them went to the ball, and the rich Mrs. Beaumont, in all her diamonds, was an un-

expected lion ; but Emily did not enjoy the ball as she expected, every human being there was a stranger to her ; she did not want for partners, the gentlemen, she had met at dinner, supplied them amply, but it was not gay to her, she knew not enough of the world to feel at home amongst those to whom she was a stranger ; and the recollection of her last ball, and her last partner, brought tears into her eyes—she saw no one around her that, to her, was like Count St. Ange.

Mrs. Beaumont staid one more day ; the races were in reality over, but there had been a by-match or two made, a cocked hat stakes rode by gentlemen, and it served for a morning amusement ; and in the evening, notwithstanding most of the party had danced till four in the morning, and some of the young men had rode a heat or two, still dancing was again the order of the night.

When Mrs. Beaumont and Emily had driven next day from the door, the latter exclaimed, “ How gay people are in the country, I am quite surprised, for I expected no society at all ! ”

“ I am afraid,” said Mrs. Beaumont, “ you will find the Abbey quite realize your idea of the dullness of the country ; for we shall only have our neighbours the Worthleys, and they are growing old

and dull now ; but I will try, for your sake, Emily, to get into a little society, and make my house agreeable enough for people at a distance to come, and stay with me. I will take a lesson from Lady Laurel, and Mrs. Harlow ; I don't know how it was, but I never did get into any society the years I lived at the Abbey before ; Mr. Beaumont had no taste for any companions but sportsmen and agriculturists and such dull people."

" My dear aunt, if you will forgive me for saying so, don't you think Miss Briggs helped to keep people away from you, with her *blueism* and her *talents* ? "

" Perhaps you are right, my good Briggs had many excellent qualities, but she did not understand how to get up an acquaintance, she was always getting hold of some supremely clever horror ; but you must do *your* best, Emily, to help me, and together we may manage it."

Mrs. Beaumont had resided very little at the Abbey since her widowhood ; very early in that she went abroad, and after nearly three years' absence, fearful of any rustic expression of joy at her return, ringing of bells, or bonfires ; she contrived to deceive her poorer neighbours, by arriving sooner, by two days, than she was expected, and taking a circuitous route,

and entering the park in a different direction than she would naturally have done coming from London; they were not aware of her arrival, till her house steward went round the village the next morning, and informed its inhabitants, that his mistress was so much gratified by their delicate attention, in letting her come home unnoticed, that she should send beef and ale to every house, and reward the ringlers more bountifully for their silence; of course this hint was not lost on them, and they therefore allowed Mrs. Beaumont and Emily to come quietly home.

On the former occasion, the mistress of the Abbey arrived on a November evening, and fresh from the warm skies of Italy, and the exhilarating air of Paris; after then, *triste* and dismal must be even such a place as Beaumont Abbey, though, like many other places in England, it had many beauties when enlivened by sunshine; in a very short time its owner declared to her dear friend, Miss Briggs, that she could not exist there.

She determined to visit Mrs. Beaumont's mother at Bath, and finding more warmth, and more amusement there, she spent the winter in Princes Buildings, and wrote to a house agent in London, to look out for a suitable house for her to purchase there.

This active gentleman was not long in selecting

one in Stanhope-street, it suited exactly, Mrs. Beaumont and Miss Briggs came early to town, to fit up and decorate this house, and form a London acquaintance ; how they have sped, these pages have already told.

CHAPTER X.

THE accounts from Cheltenham of Mrs. Villiars' health and spirits induced Miss Shirley to hasten down there, even before she was summoned, to Miss Neville's wedding; where she could be *useful*, was to her always the point of attraction.

She and Caroline were not long there before the latter was called on to be bride's-maid, and Miss Shirley, to console Mrs. Villiars for the loss of her niece, which she now felt would be a great diminution of her *own* comfort.

The wedding was strictly private, General Forester gave the bride away, Mrs. Forester did not attend, as she thought it would distress her mother, if she put off her mourning for an hour, but Miss Shirley gave the ceremony her countenance.

The usual breakfast was a mere family party; and when the bride and bridegroom drove from the door, poor Mrs. Villars almost thought it an act of unkindness towards *her* that her niece had inmarried.

Two days after, General and Mrs. Forester set off for Elstree Park, were much business called them, leaving Mrs. Villars in the care of Miss Shirley till their return, which they imagined would not exceed a fortnight.

It is a curious fact how much of our daily comfort depends on the hour at which the post comes in; whether the happiness, or rather comfort of a London life is increased by the two-penny postman knocking at one's door every two hours, it is not our present business to determine; it is the general post in the country, not fraught with notes of invitation, or notes of excuse, that we are talking about.

The lady who "said she never knew if her day would be happy or miserable till the post came in," was certainly an advocate for letters arriving at breakfast time, and so are we; in London a material part of your day is gone before twelve or one o'clock, its arrangements at least determined upon. No, give us breakfast for the hour of receiving our letters, and reading our newspapers!

At Cheltenham the post arrived at that propitious

hour, and the letters and papers were put on Mrs. Villiar's table with her cocoa, and her tea.

On the morning, at which we are now arrived, one letter was for Caroline, and one for Miss Shirley ; Mrs. Villiars contented herself with the newspaper ; she rather hated letters, she had no correspondent of the sentimental kind ; letters of business from her agent were detestable, and she had a few days before heard that General and Mrs. Forester had arrived at Elstree, and Mrs. Wetheral was well and happy,—matters of course—and she rather rejoiced the post was fraught with no tidings for her, excepting what the Morning Herald contained.

Caroline's letter was from her sister, with an account of her pleasant journey down to Beaumont Abbey ; the fishing party at Beachgrove, and the race ball at Banbury, and the party at Hanwell Park ; and, above all, her having seen Lady Worthley, who was anxiously expecting Miss Shirley at Wedglock Park ; Caroline, on finishing this sentence looked up, and started on seeing the extreme paleness and agitation of her aunt's countenance, her lips trembled, and her hands trembled, and she said,

“ My dearest aunt, what is the matter ? ”

“ The post, Caroline, brings tidings of joy to some, and woe to thousands, I am just now of the latter number, but finish your breakfast.”

And she herself attempted to raise her cup to her lips, but still her hand shook so much she could not trust it.

“ Let me get you some sal volatile, dear aunt ! ”

“ No, my love, my mind must be calmed by a loftier spirit than sal volatile, One to whom I have ever flown for succour, and never in vain ; and as you may be called on to share my grief, I recommend you to the same Source for consolation.”

It was now Caroline’s turn to be agitated, and with that presentiment, we can never account for, but so often feel, she said,

“ Have you bad news from India ? ”

“ I have,” replied Miss Shirley, and after, a pause, added, “ my accounts of your dear father distress me very much.”

“ Is he ill ? ”

“ Very ill indeed.”

“ Is he coming to England for his health ? ”

“ Certainly not,” replied Miss Shirley.

“ Oh ! ” said Caroline, “ then that is the reason he has put off our going ; but surely, dear aunt, he is coming for us himself ? ”

“ It is quite impossible ! ”

And Miss Shirley laid an emphasis on the word *impossible*, that struck Caroline’s heart.

“ He is dead, then ? ”

And before her aunt could reply, she covered her face with her hands, and burst into a most violent flood of tears. Miss Shirley led her to her own room, told her she would join her in a moment, as soon as she had spoken to Mrs. Villiars.

She well knew what relief *tears* are in grief, and that there comes a time when the fountains of the heart and eye are dried, when grief affects deeper for it, she wished she could weep; she returned to Mrs. Villiars, and acquainted her with the sad tidings she had received; her friend, though kind and tender hearted, was so oppressed by her own maternal loss, that every other seemed trifling, she said,

“I am very sorry for your poor brother, and for you and your nieces, but what is *your* loss to mine? Mr. Shirley was far from a young man, and no one lives to old age in the East Indies—but I!—poor unhappy I!—lost my beauteous son in the very bloom of his youth, that is far, far bitterer.”

“Your loss is a very severe one,” replied Miss Shirley, “but happily your son left no family to feel his loss in a pecuniary point; my brother was a most liberal, generous man, and I fear not always a provident one, and he has left a wife and four daughters.”

“Ah! well,” said Mrs. Villiars, “that may be sad for them; but we have all our troubles, and I am sure no one has the misery *I* have.”

This was a point not to be argued : there are some people, and very good people too, who if they are in affliction, rather take comfort that their friends have afflictions also, they do not then feel their superiority—that of their being happier than themselves.

Miss Shirley had purposely left her niece to pay her first tribute of tears to her father's memory, well knowing they relieve the first and most vivid emotions, and leave the mind calmer and more disposed to receive consolation. She was right : Caroline was now prepared to hear the particulars of her aunt's letter, it was from Mr. Melbourne, informing her that a particular friend, of her brother's, and secretary to the supreme council, Mr. Alfred Graham, had come over on very material business, both to our government, and the East India Company ; and he brought the account, that two days before he sailed Mr. Shirley died of one of those short illnesses, so common in that country ; that he was the bearer of many presents, and letters to her, and her nieces ; but they were detained with his own baggage at the custom-house, but would be delivered by him as soon as they had passed that ordeal. Mr. Melbourne would learn more particulars, and communicate them.

Caroline's grief soon abated, she had not seen her father since she was seven years old, had but faint

remembrance even of his person and features, and but few traces of his tenderness lived in her recollection, he was a busy man from his situation, as one of the Supreme Council, and the habits of India are not domestic, and therefore he ~~saw~~ but little of his children.

It is not under such circumstances, that the deep grief, usually felt for the loss of a parent, can affect the mind ; it was a great shock to her, hearing of his death without any preparation of his illness ; but he had been dead some months, and she would see nothing of the paraphernalia of death, nor had she undergone any of the previous agitation of hopes and fears ; it was a blow, it struck, and it stunned her, for a moment ; but if she did not immediately recover her usual degree of cheerfulness, she did her tranquillity : there was a painful suspense till they heard again, as to Mr. Shirley's affairs, and their disposition.

This came in the course of some days, he had, Mr. Graham said, divided his property between the children of his first and second marriage equally, leaving his personals to his widow, and the interest of *her* daughter's property during her life. She was gone to live with her father, who was Military Commandant at Calcutta ; but Mr. Shirley's property was dispersed, some of it lent to native princes, who were

not always very ready to repay ; he thought it could not be under twenty thousand pounds, it might be more, he should be able exactly to ascertain when he went back to India—so much from Mr. Graham ; Mr. Melbourne added, that his friend had come home extremely ill, and on that account had been charged with the mission we have mentioned ; that at present his time was divided between the India House and the Office of the Board of Control ; that the moment he could get away from them, he was advised to go to Cheltenham, and if *he* was likely to find Miss Shirley and her niece there, he would accompany Mr. Graham, and present him to them.

Mrs. Villiars was too happy to have any cause for keeping her visitors, and in the interval that took place before Mr. Melbourne's arrival, Caroline had recovered her spirits, and was anxious to see her father's friend, and hear much about him.

We cannot wonder, knowing as we do, how much she disliked the thoughts of going to India, that Caroline rejoiced that chance was over, but she always felt it *a duty* to check this feeling of pleasure, by saying to herself, “ I have bought the reprieve by the loss of my dear father ! ” and sometimes a reflection of the loneliness of herself and her sister, as orphans, filled her eyes with tears ; her aunt Shirley had most

kindly received her for a short time, when it was thought necessary that she should leave Mrs. Lomax, and see a little of the world, before she sailed for India; and when her dear father, for some reason yet unknown to her, determined she and her sister should not go over for another year, her aunt had most kindly consented still to have her for a guest; but she well knew her aunt's means were limited, and her habits those of retirement; she was perhaps doing violence to the latter, and exposing herself to inconvenience as respected the former, by continuing to receive her, and from the account Mr. Graham had sent them of the state of her father's affairs, it seemed doubtful if she should herself be able to contribute much to her aunt's expenses, certainly not immediately: her aunt was so good and kind to her, she could not bear to be a burthen on her; perhaps these circumstances pressed heavier on her heart than the loss of a parent, of whom she knew so little, and to whom she had not been endeared by those ties of reciprocal duty and affection, by which parents and children are so tenderly united.

Mr. Melbourne had sent the same letter of communication respecting her brother's death to Mrs. Beaumont; it was not to be expected she should feel it as a deep grief, she just remembered her brother's going

to India, he had taken her on his knee, kissed her very often, called her his pretty Fanny, and had given her a box of *bon bons*, and a beautiful wax doll, that, as long as the frail materials of which it was composed kept together, was called, “dear brother Edward’s doll,” and kissed for his sake ; he was gone they always told her, on the seas in a ship, but the doll, as all wax dolls do, broke, and brother Edward might have been forgotten, had he not some years afterwards asked his *pretty* Fanny to be Godmother to his second girl, she was then old enough to wish there should be but *one* Fanny Shirley in the world, and therefore the name of Amelia was given to the little girl.

After Mrs. Beaumont’s marriage, and indeed previous to it, the spring fleet from India always brought her a handsome shawl, a bottle of attar of roses, a beautiful ivory fan, or some other such trinket ; and, in return, Emily always received a dress for her dancing master’s ball, and one like it for *her* to present to her sister ; therefore when the young ladies were fit to leave school, Mrs. Beaumont readily invited Emily to come to her, as she found her sister was to be received by Miss Shirley.

This was an arrangement not at all agreeable to Miss Briggs, she liked no “rival near *her* throne,”

especially a young and, probably, interesting, niece, the daughter of a brother, who, upon the arrival of a shawl, or an ivory fan, was always called dear Edward! who so kindly remembered his pretty Fanny.

Upon the receipt of Mr. Melbourne's letter, Emily had been affected much as her sister was, perhaps, even less vividly, her recollection of her father was more imperfect, she was more than a year younger when she left India; she had now no Miss Briggs between her and her aunt's affections, who was beginning to feel the pleasure of having a young person to be interested about. And we are not sure that Miss Emily's quiet, uncomplaining conduct, on the score of Count St. Ange, where, it must be owned, she had not been quite fairly dealt with, did not gain very much on her aunt's good opinion and favour: when we feel we have done wrong—acted unjustly by any one, their not resenting it—their saving our *amour propre* from any painful feeling of reproach, turns our affections towards them, and mixed a sort of grateful feeling with them.

Mrs. Beaumont hardly read Mr. Melbourne's letter, and allowed her niece to give vent to those

feelings it naturally produced, than, throwing her arms round Emily's neck, and kissing her, said :

" Now you are not my niece, but my *child*, Emily, and as such I shall always consider you, and you will regard me as a parent for the future."

Emily expressed the warmest gratitude, and it would be difficult to say who was the happiest on the occasion, the obliged or the obliger.

Mrs. Beaumont felt, for the first time in her life, she had something to *love*, and to be loved by. Her *liaison* with Miss Briggs was more a matter of natural convenience, and she was a person so evidently always playing a part, and often playing it so ridiculously, that though Mrs. Beaumont esteemed and valued her, she could never love her, and now was beginning to see a good deal of Miss Briggs's humbug.

When once a door is opened to the kindly affections of the heart, no matter by what means, their tide (if it has long been pent up,) rushes forward into unknown and unexpected streams.

The day after Mrs. Beaumont received the account of the death of her brother, she wrote to her sister, informing her of her adoption of Emily, and offered a home and protection to Caroline also, if her remaining with Miss Shirley was inconvenient;

the kind and delicate way in which this was done, quite surprised Miss Shirley, but it confirmed an opinion she had always entertained, that the natural bent of her sister's mind was amiable, and generous ; only narrowed and contracted by the flattery of Miss Briggs, and her injudicious advice.

She answered the letter with an assurance of how much she felt the kindness of affection which dictated the offer; but added, "Whilst I live, I shall be most happy to consider my dear Caroline as my child; but if any thing happens to me, though she will have the little I have to leave, I should feel rejoiced she should share, with her sister, your protection and kindness."

The contents of these letters were shown to Caroline, they took a great weight off her mind,—she expressed herself in terms of the warmest gratitude to both her aunts, and looked forward, with great pleasure, to seeing a good deal of her sister when she was at Wedglock, as it was so near Beaumont Abbey. But Miss Shirley could not leave poor Mrs. Villars till her daughter returned from Elstree, and many unexpected occurrences detained her there..

About a fortnight after Mr. Melbourne's letter, he very unexpectedly one evening made his appearance at Mrs. Villars' tea-table. He said,

" His friend Mr. Alfred Graham was come down with him, to spend some time at Cheltenham, that he could himself only spare a week from business, but that he should, when Miss Shirley gave him leave, beg to introduce his friend to her and Caroline, he had brought them some things from India, that Mr. Shirley had entrusted to his care two days before his death."

This introduction took place on the following morning. Mr. Alfred Graham was nephew to the husband of a nearly blind Lady Graham we have formerly mentioned, as a friend of Miss Shirley's. Her husband had been supreme judge at Calcutta, and just before his death, but not long enough to be of much service to him, this nephew came to India as a writer. Sir William Graham, however, procured him a post, his own merit did the rest, he was secretary to the Council, a deputy judge under Mr. Shirley, and having an extensive knowledge of the Bengalee, the Hindostane, and the Sanscrit languages, he was often employed on the most important negociations with the native princes, and bid fair, if his health was restored, of rising to the highest civil honours in the Presidency.

Such was his character; he was about thirty-two, but from his residence in a hot climate, and the pre-

sent state of his health, he looked more than forty. He had a very pleasing countenance; though bronzed by heat, and yellowed by disease. His manners were perfectly gentleman-like and pleasing, there was great good humour in his countenance, which even sickness could not overcome, and at times he brightened up into something peculiarly animated and cheerful; he was full of information, both of books and men, and not shy in communicating what he knew.

He brought for Caroline a picture of her mother in a bracelet made of her father's hair, and to Emily a bracelet of her father's picture and her mother's hair, and some of those very beautiful gold chains and ornaments that India produces, set with pearls and precious stones—some shawls and worked muslins. For Miss Shirley a shawl gown, and for Mrs. Beaumont a most beautiful ivory pagoda.

Innumerable were the questions, both Miss Shirley and Caroline had to ask, concerning their lost relation, and his second family.

Mrs. Villiars felt interested in every thing that did not bear in any way on her own affliction, and she made an effort, and asked both gentlemen to dinner.

A public place, like Cheltenham, is one where ac-

quaintance is most easily made. In London, people run after their acquaintance, as a cat runs after her tail, and never catch it. And in the Country, roads, and horses, often leave intervals between visits, and it takes a long time to get intimate ; but at Cheltenham, as at Brighton, you may meet your friends five times a day, walk with them on the parade before breakfast, meet them riding after luncheon, see them at the play, or concert. So that you soon form an intimacy ; sometimes it is one that is broken at the end of a fortnight, and never renewed.

Mr. Alfred Graham's journey to Cheltenham had another object than the recovery of his own health, he had brought under his charge from Calcutta, two little boys, the sons of a friend, Mr. Molyneaux, they were to be consigned to the care of their maternal grandmother, Mrs. Poonah, then living at Cheltenham; these little boys, and their black attendant Felix, accompanied Mr. Melbourne and Mr. Graham, and were deposited as directed.

The former gentleman meant only to stay a few days, for that sort of rest which persons chained to a desk, and a close, hot office, often need.

Mr. Graham had become during his voyage much attached to these little boys, and they to him, and a day or two after his arrival having joined Miss Shir-

ley and her niece, in their walk, they met Ernest and Edward Molyneaux with their faithful attendant; they ran eagerly to Mr. Graham with all the joy children express towards those they love; Miss Shirley was fond of children, and Caroline doated on them, and of course caressed them; the children in a strange country, and just released from the confinement and monotony of a ship, were delighted by the notice they received, and happily unacquainted with the trammels of society; a day or two after, when they saw Caroline taking her early walk, though they were with their grandmother Mrs. Poonah, they left her, and ran eagerly to claim Caroline's notice: this produced a little awkwardness, which relating to her aunt, she begged Mr. Graham would introduce her to his acquaintance; and Mrs. Villiars intreated that beside the occasional dinners to Mr. Melbourne and his friend, that Miss Shirley would make any evening party of her friends she liked: she was reluctant to do this, fearing it would drive Mrs. Villiars to her dressing-room; but, on her promising occasionally to join the party, she hoped it would take her from herself, and do her good.

In their first interviews, Mr. Graham had answered abundance of questions respecting Caroline's father, and given many, to her, very interesting par-

ticulars of his habits of life, and tastes, the latter seemed of the most expensive kind, even in the luxurious East.

He could not satisfy Miss Shirley as to the amount of the provision he had made for his children, for Mr. Graham had embarked two days before Mr. Shirley's death; he was then in perfect health, and gave him his presents, letters, and messages, to his sisters and daughters; two days after, whilst the ship was in the roads, and the passengers on board, the last dispatches were brought, and the person who was the bearer of them brought, also, the report of Mr. Shirley's death. In the East, the diseases of the climate, be they cholera or fever, are generally, and too often, fatal. From the person who brought this intelligence, Mr. Graham learnt that Mr. Shirley had divided his property, as has been said, equally amongst his children; what that was, he knew not, he only knew that he had twenty thousand pounds in safe hands; a larger sum was lent to the King of Oude, but the payment of that was not so certain; money in India obtained very high interest, often twenty per cent; there were no usury laws there, so that it was proportionably hazardous as to security.

Mr. Shirley lived quite *en Prince*, even in that

country, but was punctilious in the discharge of his expenses : he ought to have been rich ; but the generous are seldom so, the pleasure of bestowing, and the joy of amassing, do not belong to the same person ; they never can go together. If Mr. Shirley had not made money, he had made friends, ready and able to serve any of his family, or connexions who might chance to go to India.

Mr. Graham said, “The laws of hospitality were very different in the East,” and, turning to Caroline, said. “If you wish to go to India, there are several houses, belonging to the first families in Calcutta, which would be open to you as your *home*.”

Caroline shook her head, and said, “To my dear father I should most willingly have gone. But my love for England, though it is not my native country, is such, I never wish to live in any other.”

This, and the tone with which it was said, was not easily forgotten by Mr. Graham.

Mr. Melbourne returned to London, and his desk. But when Miss Shirley had been introduced, as she desired, to Mrs. Poonah, she often came to them of an evening with Mr. Graham, and Mrs. Villiers joined the party, and her spirits revived in society, and general conversation, her own peculiar grief being kept out of sight.

The conversation at these meetings often turned on Calcutta ; Mrs. Poonah had resided long in India, a good part of the time up the country at Allahabad, and Negapatam, at both which places her husband had been the company's resident, and her daughter had married his successor ; she talked with the greatest pleasure and regret of her *séjour* in the East. Loved to recount the luxuries she enjoyed, and to contrast her fifty servants, with the five she was now reduced to.

Caroline's curiosity was often awakened by the subject, and she heard, with no degree of envy, the idle lives ladies were obliged to lead there ; the total impossibility of employment for many hours of the day, and many months of the year.

Caroline was never unoccupied ; her delight was some pursuit that would wholly engage her attention. Miniature painting was one of her favourite sources of amusement ; and she begged to be allowed to paint the little Molyneaux, and Mr. Graham, under pretence of keeping them quiet by his authority, always accompanied them : he and Caroline, therefore, grew gradually intimate ; sometimes Miss Shirley was there, and sometimes Mr. Graham read to Caroline whilst she pursued her employment, and not unfrequently the books were selected likely to amuse and instruct the children, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Sandford and Merton*, &c.

We are inclined to think none of the parties, and least of all Mr. Graham, were glad when the picture was finished. It was presented to Mrs. Poonah, and destined by her to return to India with Mr. Graham.

She was not a very interesting person ; had gone over very early, and with a very superficial education, to make her fortune in *Indy*, as she called it, when it was a better mart for young ladies than it is now ; she succeeded, and like many, not very wise people, fancied her line the only one in which success could be attained. However she might be able to enjoy and appreciate Eastern luxuries, she was not very much calculated for the more educated society of England, especially Miss Shirley; but she knew Lady Graham, and Lady Dickenson, so there was a link of interest, and her son-in-law and daughter had known Mr. Shirley.

CHAPTER XI.

THE intimacy between Mr. Graham and Caroline imperceptibly increased, as they do in such a place of frequent meeting, as that they were now in.

Returning one day from an airing with Mrs. Villiars, as Miss Shirley was getting out of the carriage, some boys, passing in the street, frightened the horses, they moved, and she fell on to the pavement : the servant at the carriage door broke her fall, but she fell with her foot under her, and got up in the greatest pain ; a surgeon, who was sent for, feared a small bone in the ankle was broke, and pronounced it would be some weeks before she would be able to walk.

Mrs. Villiars could hardly regret this, as it detained her friend with her, and General and Mrs.

Forester were not sorry to have a little more time to give to their affairs at Elstree. •

Caroline had most reason to regret it, as she lost her aunt as a walking companion, and was obliged to go out chaperoned by Mrs. Williams, her maid ; but she was often joined by her little friends, and much delighted with their society ; and by all the new ideas that so different a scene to what they had been used to, gave rise, she learnt from them many minute particulars of life in Calcutta, that made her rejoice she was not now doomed to it.

We little know what is, or what is not, to be our fate in this shifting work-a-day world.—One day, as Caroline was walking with Ernest and Edward, and attended by Mrs. Villiars, who had dropped behind, and was trying to enlighten Felix, as to some English customs, Mr. Graham returned from riding : when he saw the party, he gave his horse to his groom and joined Caroline, and desired the boys to run on.

We need not detail the conversation, more than to say it a good deal agitated Caroline ; and she thought it an interminable walk, and was not sorry when she reached Mrs. Villiars' door : then Mr. Graham took his leave, and, contrary to his usual practice, did not ask if he might come in the evening,

as he had been accustomed to do, since Miss Shirley's confinement to her sofa ?

Caroline looked rather flushed, and on Miss Shirley saying,

“ Who have you been with ?”

Did not answer the question. Her aunt repeated it, and Caroline did not seem to comprehend what she was saying, and answered

“ I don't know.”

“ My dear Caroline, what has happened to you ? You do not seem to know what I have been saying, or what you have been saying yourself.”

This roused her : going so close to her aunt that Mrs. Villiars, who, was very busy trying to take up a fallen stitch in her knitting, could not hear her, she said :

“ I will tell you all when we are alone.”

Mrs. Villiars always reposed in her dressing-room for an hour after dinner, and then Caroline, with a good deal of confusion and hesitation, for girls are always surprized and confounded by their first proposal, as if such a thing never happened in the world before —told her aunt that Mr. Graham had said a great many flattering things of how much he had been gratified by her acquaintance, that long before he left India he had looked with anxious hope that in one of

the daughters of his friend he might find a companion for his own life, that his wishes had been more than realized—”

“ Well, Caroline, I can imagine what Mr. Graham said, for those sort of things are much alike, but what did you say, and how do you feel on the subject?”

“ Oh, my dear aunt, I am most grateful to Mr. Graham, for his good opinion of me, and so I told him; but I have escaped India, though by a melancholy event, and I am not going there now, I have no duty to call me, I shall not voluntarily enter into one that will—the more I hear of the place, its ways, its climate, and its society, the more I feel an abhorrence to it.”

“ Did you tell Mr. Graham so?”

“ I did, in the gentlest terms I could, but he said he must talk to you, and I must take time to consider of it, unless I had a personal dislike to him. I could not say I had, for I have always thought him a most agreeable, amiable, though very yellow, man.”

“ My dear Caroline, I cannot allow you to talk in any slighting way of one so very estimable, and who was so great a friend of your father’s.”

“ Forgive me, my dear aunt, but there was a girl with us at Mr. Lomax’s who had remained in Cal-

cutta till she was much older than we were, she was always taking of *yellow* men, who she said had no hearts, only livers." We all, who were going to India, and did not like it, were too ready to listen to all her nonsense, and ridicule ; but I will never repeat it, as you do not like it."

" There is nothing so dangerous as ridicule, believe me, Caroline, the wisest and best things, and the most estimable people, may be made to appear ridiculous by any one possessed of that dangerous talent. But I want now to know a little more what Mr. Graham said to you, and what you said to him, that I may judge how matters stand between you : but first tell me, has it never occurred to you, that he had a more than mere acquaintance regard for you ? because neither I, nor Mrs. Villiars, who is not the most quick-sighted person in the world, have been blind to his partiality, only we thought it best to leave the thing to take its course."

" I must own," said Caroline " that whilst I was painting the little boys, there was something of tenderness, something, I do not know how to describe it, in his manner, that prevented me from looking up when he spoke."

" And now tell me, for it is material I should know, how did he make his proposal, and what did

you say to it? Don't think, dearest Caroline, I have any old maidish curiosity to gratify, but you have no parent, and I have every reason to believe the one you are now mourning, would have rejoiced most heartily in having Mr. Graham for a son-in-law—I don't feel sure that your Father had not intimated as much to him, giving him the choice of his daughters."

" Well then, he has only seen one, how can he chuse? he should have staid till he was acquainted with Emily, it is not giving me fair play; perhaps she is better suited to him than I am, he cannot tell."

" But I can," said Mrs. Shirley, " from what I have seen of Mr. Graham's turn of mind, that *you* are the person most adapted for him, and most likely to please a man of his sense and intelligence."

" It is great presumption in me, dearest aunt, to differ from you, and all your experience, but I have often heard, that men like best in a wife one least like themselves in disposition. Mr. Graham is rather grave, Emily is gayer than I am, and I have been told that opposite tempers make the happiest couples."

" There are many axioms about the world, that sound well, but have no real truth in them, and I

think this is one; in so close and intimate a connexion as marriage, *I* am persuaded that dispositions should, to a certain degree, accord, and so should habits of thought, and motives of action, I do not deny that many persons of very opposite tempers and dispositions live very happily together; but then there must be great good sense, and forbearance on one side, or the other, and a large share of affection also. But to return to Mr. Graham, Caroline, what passed between you?"

"I will tell as well as I can recollect, but it flurried me a good deal. The little boys were running joyously before us at a little distance, and Williams and Felix were behind: I said, How happy those dear little boys are, how much they seem to enjoy our English climate, and the power it gives them of exercise! I wonder how children in India live; I wonder what I did myself, when there; I think I must have been very unhappy. I really, if you will believe me, dear aunt, meant nothing beyond more conversation. Mr. Graham said, and in a very peculiar tone of voice,

"How I wish, Miss Shirley, I could persuade you out of your prejudice against a life in India; it is an unjust one; I am sure, if the most devoted affection, and I hope not an uneligible situation, could

persuade you to relax in your objections, you would find in the unhappy object now before you, the most tender, the most grateful of mortals.'

"I was so surprised, I could not speak; so he continued,

"'Give me but one gleam of hope, that I am not wholly indifferent to you, and I will live on that, till I have, by unremitting assiduity, made myself worthy of your regard, of your love; allow me to say.'"

Caroline was out of breath.

"Well, my dear, and what did *you* say?"

"I could only say, that, as a friend of my father's, I must always feel the greatest esteem for him, and also, as a favourite of your's; and that I was most grateful for the preference he honoured me with; but that I should prefer the poorest cottage in England to a throne in the East; and I hoped, for his own sake, as well as mine, he would think no more of a silly, prejudiced girl, who felt herself unworthy of all he offered her."

"Very pretty indeed, Caroline, I give you credit for your answer; only, I wish, I *must* wish, it had not been so decided; but that you had taken a little time to consider of it. You do not know how scarce men of Mr. Graham's excellence are, or all the advan-

tages of his situation. You would have been too happy to have accepted it, had you gone to your father."

"But if I am not now obliged to do so by duty to a parent, why should I voluntarily undertake what is so repugnant to me? I am sure I should not live five years, if I went to Calcutta."

"That you cannot possibly know; you were born there; it is your native climate; why should it not agree with you?"

"So said Mr. Graham, and that it was whol-somer than people thought it; I am sure his—I must not say what—face is no proof of it: nor his friend Mrs. Poonah, who looks quite an old woman, and they say she is not forty; but Mr. Graham said he must talk to you on the subject; he begged me to consider of it."

"Well, I am glad of that, and I hope you will consider that such an amiable, excellent man as he is, may not easily fall in your way; and 'perhaps such a situation *never*: but I should be sorry to use any attempt to persuade you, or any one else, Caroline, to unite themselves to a man they could not love, let his pretensions be what they may. But it seems to me, that it is his situation, and not himself that you object to; you have no dislike to *him*?"

"Oh, no, my dear aunt, no dislike to him, as an acquaintance—as a friend—but not as a husband; no, no!"

"But why not?"

"He is older than I am, and so much wiser."

"That is in his favour; I thought, Caroline, you preferred people of information; you have always said so."

"And I say true; I don't know any body whose conversation I like so much, excepting Mr. Melbourne's."

"But you would not like to marry Mr. Melbourne?"

"Oh, no! not more than I should Mr. Graham; perhaps still less."

"Well, then, Caroline, you will consider of this matter; give it due deliberation, be not a silly girl, do not refuse to hear reason."

Caroline saw plainly what her aunt's opinion and wishes were, but still she knew her to be too good, and too kind, to insist on her doing any thing she found *very* repugnant.

There is no circumstance attending a residence in India of such disastrous consequences as the necessity of sending children very young to England for education, and estranging them from their parents,

till the tie is almost broken, or, at least, loosened to a degree disadvantageous to both parties. Parents are unacquainted with the dispositions of their children, they have no opportunity of forming their minds ; that arduous, anxious task is left in the hands of strangers and though parental affection may outlive the separation, for it is one of the strongest of human ties, the child, from the early age in which it was separated from the parent, retains little recollection, and as little affection for the relation.

Caroline had always been used to talk of her dear father, though, if she had met him accidentally, she could not have recognized his person, and as the idea of him was always accompanied with the fear of his bestowing her, the moment she came under his care, on one she might not like, she was therefore apt to think of him with less affection than she ought to have done. She reproached herself for these feelings, and they were much against Mr. Graham, he was perhaps the very rock she would have split on ; but the kindness of her aunt was so great, she was bound by every tie of duty and inclination to give the thing the consideration it deserved ; but, like all very young persons, she fancied her resolution must be irrevocable. But, as we are bound to disclose in some cases all we know, we are free to say that every time Mr. Graham pre-

sented himself to her imagination, she could not help recollecting some very kind thing he had done, or some very sensible one he had said.

Before the evening, Miss Shirley received a note from him, asking when he might find her alone for half an hour? She fixed the time of Mrs. Villiars's *siesta*, and he was punctual to the time; he repeated to Miss Shirley his attachment to her niece, and his regret at finding her so adverse to his suit; and so determined against going to India—that was a point that it was impossible for him to cede; however ardent his affection was, his post there was one of high honour, and great emolument; he hoped, some ten or fifteen years' hence, he might be able to return to his native country, and spend the remainder of his days in ease and affluence.

Miss Shirley most sincerely regretted Caroline's objections, "but hoped they might not be insurmountable;" that word was ~~bal~~ to Mr. Graham, he was ready to wait, if not so long as Jacob waited for Rachel, at least as long as his leave of absence from his post lasted, if he might hope for success at last: he asked "if he had any rival?"

Miss Shirley assured him not, she believed Caroline's unfortunate dislike to leaving England, and perhaps being taken by surprise, might have been

against him ; she added, “by my brother’s desire, his daughters were placed for education where other girls under the same circumstances were placed also ; she regretted it, for she thought there was a fashion amongst them, in which they fortified each other to dislike going back, and she was sorry to say Caroline had very strongly imbibed this prejudice ; but time did wonders, and she assured him, he should have *her* best services, as far as she found them consistent with her niece’s happiness.”

He rose to take his leave, just as Mrs. Villiars entered the room.

“ You are not going ; Mr. Graham ? you must drink tea with us, we are quite alone.”

“ He had,” he said, “ an engagement,” but on Miss Shirley, towards whom he looked, saying,

“ Oh, we will not detain you the whole evening, but do stay to tea,”

He acquiesced, and, when it was brought in, the servant asked “ if he should let Miss Caroline know ?” Miss Shirley said,

— “ Yes, that we wait for her, and Mr. Graham is in a hurry, so *I* beg she will come down directly.”

Caroline knew by the message what her aunt wished, and felt afraid to refuse, and reluctant to disoblige one so kind to her, so she wound herself up

as well as she could to meet Mr. Graham: both coloured, and trembled, but Caroline the soonest revived; women have more command of their feelings than men have, and they are more used to control them; besides, Caroline was on the "vantage ground," Mr. Graham felt he had been refused; however, as conversation was carried on upon indifferent subjects, and Caroline was occupied by the duties of the tea-table, she did not join much in it.

Mr. Graham went away soon after, but he did not shake hands with Caroline as usual; this did not escape Mrs. Villiars, who was a bit of a Mrs. Mala-prop: she said,

"Have you and Mr. Graham quarrelled, Caroline? you looked as if you were afraid he would bite you; and I don't know what he looked like, quite beside himself."

Caroline made her escape out of the room, as if she did not hear the question; and, when she was gone, Miss Shirley, to prevent farther *contretems*, told Mrs. Villiars how things stood.

"A mighty foolish thing, indeed!" she exclaimed, "where will Caroline get a better offer? such a *pretty* man (her favourite expression); I hope, my good friend, your sense will guide her, and that you will not let her continue in such folly."

"I shall do my best to persuade her to like him ; but I cannot, nor will not, persuade her to marry any one she cannot love, but I hope the best."

Mrs. Villiars, who had been indulgent to the greatest and most faulty excess, as concerned her own children, was inclined to give no quarter to any one else.

When Miss Shirley was alone with her niece, she said,

"I was much pleased, dear Caroline, with the readiness with which you came down this evening, and the composure of your behaviour."

"I am glad you were satisfied, aunt ; but I own I felt very much agitated, and should have been very glad to have remained in my own room ; I do not know how I ought to behave towards Mr. Graham ; I am very grateful to him for the preference he has shown me ; but I am afraid if I show it, he may consider it as an approval ; I should be very sorry to mislead him."

"You are quite right there, Caroline ; at the same time your appearing very shy, or awkward, towards him, might give him false hopes ; but he has fully explained himself to me ; he only wishes to be allowed to win your affections."

"Oh, my dear aunt !"

"And oh, my dear niece, why should you not give him that chance? you have *not*, at least I don't know that you have, any prior engagement."

"No, indeed, I *have* none."

"Then let him, at least, try to fill a place that is vacant. Is it that you have any—personal dislike to him?"

"Oh no; as a friend, as a brother, I could have the sincerest regard for him; but I cannot—I cannot—be in love with him."

"Now," replied Miss Shirley, "I see our ground; you do not feel that romantic preference for Mr. Graham that would make you go with him, or for him, to the extremity of the globe, and therefore you think you cannot love him sufficiently to become his wife. Believe me, Caroline, conjugal love, in its purest and happiest state, is only the most exalted degree of *friendship*. Those who marry, and many do so, only upon sincere esteem, upon a regard for the character, and a respect for the conduct, of the man they accept, have a far better chance of happiness than those who consult chiefly their imagination; who picture to themselves that fervour of attachment which does not exist in the world, or if it does, never lasts; it soon, like all violent emotions, wears itself out; a woman who has magnified into an *idol* the man she

wishes to marry, finds, when they are compelled to tread together the dull routine of life, and its duties, that she has, perhaps, been following a shadow; human life is chiefly made up of cares and sorrows, some bright gleams do come across it; but, "like angel visits, they are few and far between." In a husband we can only expect a partner in our struggle through life, but one from nature and education stronger in mind and body, to support us under our trials, and also to share in our pleasures. Men have the power of looking round the world, and choosing their partners; women can only select out of those that offer to them, and must, under the happiest and most favourable circumstances, have something to overlook; something to accommodate to; *self controul, and self denial*, are hourly the lot of women. But remember, my dear Caroline, in trusting your fate, your happiness, to the keeping of a man of high character, of excellent principles, and of good conduct, it must be, in some measure your own fault, if you do not find happiness."

"But, my dear aunt, do you allow nothing for inclination: I may not be able to like such a person."

"Then I should be far from desiring you, or advising you to accept him, and still more averse to your

doing so if you had the slightest preference to any one else—but if neither the one nor the other is the case, I do not think you are doing justice either to Mr. Graham, or yourself, to let a sort of childish dislike to the country, he is destined to live in, be a bar to what may be a very happy marriage for you: but what, let me ask you, what has given you such a prejudice against India, where you were born, and where you have always looked forward to your home? I should think you cannot have sufficient recollection of Calcutta, to form any opinion good or bad of it."

"I only remember," replied Caroline, "the intense heat, which, even as a child, made me incapable even of the amusements and occupations of children; and a sort of disgust at the more than half naked servants and people one always saw—and, to own the truth, there was at Mrs. Lomax's, a Miss Tomlins, who had left India when she was much older than we were; and she was also so full of horrors of the heat—of the treachery of the blacks—and above all of the desolation of going up the country, as it is called, that she increased my dislike, and then the sort of people who came to see her, the Mrs. Poonahs, so ignorant, and in such bad style."

" You are, to be sure, a little fastidious, dear Ca-

roline, and have given an extreme—nay almost a caricature picture of India and its society—but relative to the latter, I am assure you that the sort of young women, half educated I grant, who used fifty years ago to go over to India to make their fortunes, no longer find it a market; most of those who go out now, are the daughters of persons who have some post there, who came over here for educations, and go back there to marry and settle. Depend upon it, had your poor father's life been prolonged, you, and your sister would have gone, there on this latter speculation—now you have a choice of going, not only in an independent, but even in a high situation, for I have reason to believe Mr. Graham's delicacy has induced him to keep in the back ground his own prospect of rising to the very first post there, not excepting eventually that of Governor General: but I do not think at your age, and with your disposition, Caroline, that ambition has any weight with you."

" My dear aunt, if I did not like Mr. Graham, his being an Emperor would not tempt me, at least I hope so, and I think so."

" But it would not be an *objection*," said her aunt smiling.

" No, certainly not."

" Well then, consider your own present situation,

your fortune, if it amounts to what we hope, will hardly produce you two hundred a year—not enough either to make you independent, or to tempt any man; you might, by adding a little to my income, enable me to live a little more in society than I have hitherto done, but it would be a great violence to my inclinations, I freely confess; and when I am no more, you could only go on in the same dull track; and, believe me, it is, as life declines, that we old maids most severely feel our situation—our general want of duties, excepting those we may make out of friendship; and, as life wanes, and infirmities render us unable to be useful to others, we deeply feel the want of children, or grand-children to excite our love, and interest our feelings. Dr. Johnson says marriage has many cares, celibacy no pleasures.—He ought to have said *few* pleasures, at least, few domestic ones: if we have no nieces, we can only have cats, lap dogs, and parrots, to love. But I go back, after all, to the point I set out from—give Mr. Graham a fair chance of winning your affection; trust to his delicacy in not distressing you by his assiduities; if he cannot succeed, you will be candid, and tell him so; but, till your mind is *unalterably* made up, (for I will not allow that you are yet a sufficient judge, whether you do, or do not, like him,) receive him as your father's

friend, and give him time to become more to you than he is now."

Caroline could not but acquiesce in the proposal; she felt she owed it to her aunt not to be a burthen on her, if she could help it; and she owed it to the memory of her father, always to treat his friend as her own.

Thus then matters were put on amicable footing: Mr. Graham visited at Mrs. Villiars as usual, paid Caroline the same attentions in bringing her flowers and new books he had always done; there was sometimes a restraint and a timidity in her manners, and occasionally a tenderness, a devotedness, in his, beyond what it used to be—but nothing more.

Miss Shirley told him that her niece had agreed to receive his friendship without pledging herself to any thing more; and he was sufficiently in love to live on slender hopes.

Very soon after this tacit arrangement had taken place, both the little Molyneaux boys were taken ill. Mr. Graham was distressed beyond measure; he devoted himself to them, as if they were his own; their disease turned out to be the measles: Ernest had it slightly, but his brother was in considerable danger, and, whilst he was so, Mr. Graham never left his bedside: his attention to the little invalid quite astonished

Mrs. Poonah, who had been chiefly used to the attendance of slaves or menials; but if she could not comprehend the tenderness of Mr. Graham's feelings, she was lavish in the praise of his, to her, extraordinary conduct.

When the little boys were convalescent, Caroline visited them every day; had always some new toy, or new game, most of them of her own manufactory, to amuse them; she often found Mr. Graham employed to the same purpose, and it drew them together by a reciprocal feeling; sometimes, for fear of oppressing her, he left her there, and took his ride; but he made amends, by a visit to Mrs. Villiars and Miss Shirley in the evening; and, on one occasion, the former, who could not comprehend Caroline's rejection of Mr. Graham, said,

“ Well, Caroline, I was so glad you sung all Mr. Graham’s favourite songs to-night; it was very pretty of you, and I hope it shows you are coming to your senses about him.”

Miss Shirley very much regretted this speech, as she saw Caroline coloured at it, and she feared it would rather retard than help the thing; though her own observation told her, that her niece’s manner was more cordial, and less reserved, towards Mr. Graham, almost every day.

Little Ernest did not recover, as it was expected he would do when his disease was over ; his physician recommended the sea. Mrs. Poonah disliked the sea, of all things, and more especially she disliked it in the midst of the Cheltenham season ; so she proposed sending the children, to some sea bathing place with Felix. Mr. Graham felt how ill able an Indian servant, who had been but a few weeks in England, was to such a charge ; and, having undertaken the care of the little boys, and attached himself to them, he could not bear this plan, and offered, instead of staying at Cheltenham, to go with them to Brighton for a fortnight himself, at which time his presence in London would be necessary.

This piece of good nature, and self-denial, had a great effect on Caroline ; and she so very often repeated “ how very good natured and kind it was,” that Mrs. Villiars said,

“ I am glad you begin to see the worth of Mr. Graham’s character, Caroline.”

It was true that she was beginning to see him in the most favourable light ; she was grown used to his attentions, unobtrusive as they were ; and she now and then thought Cheltenham would be very dull to her when he was gone.

When he took leave of Miss Shirley, she, almost

afraid to raise too much hope, could not help saying,

"I trust it will not be long before we meet again."

Caroline looked agitated when she held out her hand to him at parting, and, if he detained it a moment longer than usual, we must excuse him, he could not speak, he only *looked* his adieu.

Caroline was not destined to feel what her present *séjour* would be without him, for Miss Shirley had for some time had her surgeon's leave to move from under his care; and, hearing that General and Mrs. Forester were coming to Mrs. Villiars, she had written to fix the time of being at Wedglock Park, where Lady Worthley had long expected them: there other scenes awaited Caroline. She had as yet seen nothing of the world, even in the most limited sense of the word, at Mrs. Lomax's; there were only twelve young ladies, and those chiefly from the East; she had therefore no regular vacations; those of the young ladies who had friends, went to them when it was convenient, and the others she took for six weeks to the seaside, and relaxed a little of their usual studies; but her establishment was most like a home education, excepting as to society—that she could not give them, for she had little leisure from her various duties to keep it, but of what she had, the elder young ladies

partook, but it was of course confined ; so that, till Caroline came to her aunt, she knew comparatively few people ; Mrs. Lomax had succeeded in keeping novels from her pupils.

Caroline had naturally a good deal of observation and tact, but wanted a wider field to exercise them in. She was in many respects very superior to her sister in understanding, if behind her in some of her accomplishments.

In person, Caroline was tall and graceful, had particularly intelligent, dark eyes, and a brilliant complexion for a brunette : some one said of her, with great truth, that her good sense was seen in her eye, and her good temper in her mouth.

From Emily, Sir Thomas Lawrence, with a little of his refined imagination, might have painted a Hebe, or a Flora. From Caroline, with no imagination, he might have painted a youthful Cornelia, or an Octavia.

CHAPTER XII.

THE journey of less than fifty miles, from Cheltenham to Wedglock Park, was easy and pleasant ; there Caroline was to see a country house, and the life of an English country gentleman, in its greatest perfection

Sir Charles and Lady Worthley were old people they had had a large family, of twelve children, but had unfortunately lost half of them ; one child in infancy, a son at school from a fever ; two daughters within a fortnight of each other, one in a tedious atrophy, and the other a sacrifice to her attentions to, and affection for, her sister ; a son at Waterloo ; and another at the battle of Navarino ; so that they had often drunk of the bitter cup of affliction, and supported each other in their heavy losses.

, Of these that remained, the three daughters were

married, and happily so ; two sons also were married, the eldest to an heiress, on whose property in Wales he lived ; one son was still unmarried, he was the youngest, and had from his infancy been sickly, so much so that he could not be sent to school ; he was now in orders, had the living of Wedglock, and lived with his Father and Mother.

Sir Charles was an excellent man, possessed of good sense, and high principles ; perhaps a little too much of a Church and King man, for the present times ; for he

• Dreaded naught like alteration,
Improvement still was innovation,
He thought t'wou'd indicate a falling state
If Sternhold should give way to Tate.

He was descended from a gouty family ; and though that has been called a gentleman's disease, he had seen enough of its suffering in his father to feel most anxious to eradicate it ; and fancying, as many do, that high living promotes it, he was a perfect Anchorite : but his forbearance had not the desired effect, the disease was in his blood, he only changed its nature, and in him it became not the rich, but the poor, man's disease, rheumatic gout ; he was equally a martyr to it ; and, at the time we write, was confined to a wheeling chair, with the use only of one hand.

Lady Worthley did all that the most affectionate and attentive wife could do to alleviate his sufferings and amuse his mind, and in the latter she was greatly assisted by her youngest son; he read to his father, wrote for him, and transacted his family business, but subservient to his direction. In his own habits, Mr. George Worthley was sickly and effeminate, as is often the case with the youngest child of a large family, especially if he is an invalid, and requires a large share of indulgence.

Wedglock was a very large house, and Sir Charles's estate allowed of his keeping up a large establishment, and always having his house filled with visitors. He and his lady were now too old for that, but their large family supplied the deficiency; they had always either one of their sons and his family, or that of one of their daughters, sometimes two of them; at our present writing, there was only their second daughter, Mrs. Mackinnon, (whose husband was gone to look after his Irish property,) four of her children, and a governess.

Caroline was unused to a country house and its ways. The day after her aunt's and her arrival, they had a neighbouring family to dine and sleep, besides Mrs. Beaumont and Emily.

The meeting between the sisters was very in-

teresting, they embraced, and the tears of each trickled on to the bosom of the other: they were both orphans now! and, perhaps, destined never to pass another week together; but the young do not look to the gloomy side of life's picture, happily for them they do not.

It was the observation of a wise man, on seeing some young people merry and enjoying themselves, “ If any of those, now happy beings, could look into the map of their future lives, they would not be as gay as they are.”

The family visiting Lady Worthley not being acquaintances of Caroline’s and Emily’s, they did not feel obliged to play the agreeable, excepting when Mrs. Beaumont, who wished to improve acquaintance with the Turnbulls, who were not very distant neighbours of hers, desired her nieces to sing, which they did most readily; they contrived to sit together, and enjoy a tête-a-tête even in the drawing room—as their sleeping apartments communicated, we fear they sat up talking longer than was good for those who want *beauty sleep*.

Emily, of course, told her history of Count St. Ange,—but her aunt’s subsequent kindness to her had disarmed her as to her share in the dismissal

of her lover, and she was rather inclined to lay the blame on him.

Caroline did not find much occasion to pour in consolation—the Count was rather a frivolous character, more calculated to excite vanity than love: and, since his disappearance, Emily had seen some apparently, more agreeable men, particularly her cousin, as he called himself, though he was no cousin, Beaumont Hastings—he was the flower of all the knights she had seen. She only hoped he would make a visit to the Abbey whilst Caroline was in the neighbourhood; he had been invited and promised to come.

Caroline had her history of Mr. Graham, but she was, on this subject, more reserved than her sister was towards her, and she shewed a dislike to be much questioned.

"But, my dear Caroline," said Emily, "What sort of a man is he?"

"Why rather yellow, as you know Fanny Tompkins used to say all the men in India were."

"Well, but what does that signify, English men grow red, I am sure that's worse; Lord Byron, the beauty of Romance, was pale and sallow."

"But I do not like going to India, I cannot bear the thoughts of it."

"Oh, Caroline, don't say so, when you would go under the care of an amiable husband, as you say he is. Only think, if we had gone this year, and found our dear father no more!—we must have taken up with any one that would have had us—we should have had no home!"

This did not strike Caroline before: sometimes those who have not the highest understandings, but who have good natural feeling, see occurrences in a fairer point of view, than greater refiners.

"But," said Caroline, "You, Emily, will have the comfort of settling in England!"

"I must settle where aunt Beaumont chooses, my obligations to her are too great for me ever to dispute her will!"

"Perhaps," replied Caroline, "I ought to have the same feeling towards aunt Shirley;" and she said to herself, "I will try for it."

Before the young ladies departed for the night, Emily said,

"Is not that Mr. George Worthley a very odd person? they say his greatest favorite is a large Tabby cat, that he treats her as if she was his daughter, and spends a great deal of his time nursing and caressing her!"

"My aunt Shirley, who has known him from a

child, says he is a very amiable person, and the most dutiful, and useful of sons : but she owns he is, in some respects, eccentric, as most sickly people are. I suppose this cat is one of his eccentricities, replied Caroline.'

Emily and Mrs. Beaumont did not extend their stay beyond the next morning.

Caroline found great delight in playing with the little Mackinnons, and tried to draw portraits of two of them, grouped as the children of Mr. Calmady. Mr. George Worthley took an unusual interest in the picture, and, before Caroline had been three days in the house, Lady Worthley said,

"Really, Caroline, your influence over *poor* George, as she used to call him, is very great ; I never knew him leave Jessica, his favourite cat, so long, before ;" adding, as an excuse for what might seem folly, "Very good-natured, kind hearted people, like *poor* George, must have something to love, and his nieces are not here long enough to make much way into his heart."

However Caroline might have been disposed to laugh at *poor* George, and his cat, she had too high a respect for Lady Worthley to do it, after what she had said : indeed, she was one of those people whose opinion you could not help feeling was law. With

the gentlest manner, and the softest voice, there was a strong sense, and such a perfectly right way of thinking, displayed in all she said, that it brought conviction to the mind : it was easier to distrust oneself, than to distrust *her* judgment. She fulfilled all the various duties of her station most perfectly, and without that bustling fever that belongs to many people who have large families, and large households to look after. She was a main-spring ; but that main-spring had a diamond to work on ; her own firm and active mind. She had been severely tried by the loss of her children, but she was nevertheless resigned, and always cheerful ; anxious to soften, to her beloved husband, the privations and sufferings belonging to his infirm state of health. She was the sheet anchor of all her children, though they were married ; her advice, and her opinion, guided them in all emergencies. And she was the same to her neighbours, of high, and low, degree ; and yet, so quiet and unpretending was her manner, those who knew but little of her might be tempted to suppose her the led, rather than the leader.

Mrs. Beaumont had been prejudiced against her by Miss Briggs, who called her a meddling old woman, a character she was the farthest from possible. But it was not likely, such as we have de-

scribed her, that she would be a person to patronize Miss Briggs's absurd pretensions.

Caroline, only used to the small establishments of her aunt, and Mrs. Lomax, was astonished at the number of servants that appeared, night and morning, in the library, when Mr. George Worthley read family prayers; and was still more surprised, to learn from her aunt's maid who dressed her, that only one half of the under servants attended each time, and that the household usually consisted of forty persons.

How was all this kept in order by the *quiet* lady Worthley, who seemed to sit down to her carpet work like other people!

Miss Shirley enlightened her niece: it was the pervading *mind* that did it. Lady Worthley looked into everything, but it was *regularly*, and *systematically*. And, in addition to her own numerous household, Caroline sometimes accompanied her to her village, where she had her schools, and her alms-houses—the most unruly of her various cares; but all was regulated with the most exact attention, and the most perfect composure.

During Mr. George Worthley's attendance on the sittings of his little nieces, he could not help forming the wish that his Jessica should also have her

portrait taken ; and, in his arms, he brought her, with his petition, to Caroline. She was too anxious to oblige on all occasions to refuse this, but thought the cut would have a better effect, alone, sleeping on a chair; she took a most successful sketch, and *poor George* was so delighted, and showed so much attention to Caroline, that Miss Shirley, knowing the blindness, of even the most sensible mothers to the deficiencies of their children, on Lady Worthley expressing her delight that Caroline had excited such an interest in her poor George, thought it right, to explain her situation with regard to Mr. Graham ; it seemed a damp to Lady Worthley ; but she said, ‘

“ Surely, Caroline cannot refuse such a match as that !”

“ I hope not,” said Miss Shirley, “ but Caroline has personal charms that may make her hope to do as well in England : going to India is the *only*, as I hope, objection.”

A few days after Miss Shirley had been at Wedglock, she received a large packet of letters from India, forwarded, as usual, by Mr. Melbourne ; they contained the very unpleasant information that Mr. Edward Shirley’s affairs had not turned out as well as was at first expected ; and a doubt that when all

the debts were paid, there would then be as much as two thousand pounds a—piece for his daughters certainly not more.

Miss Shirley communicated this disagreeable information to her niece. But young people, especially those who have never felt what it was to have a wish (as far as expense was concerned,) ungratified, can form very little idea of the privations of poverty; it is to them an indefinite term; it is not therefore to be wondered at that Caroline did not feel this intelligence as her aunt did; but, when the latter explained that her niece had not enough even for the most contracted independence, it came more home to her. How far such a state of things operated in Mr. Graham's favour, we cannot take upon us to say; for, of all passions and feelings, mercenary ones are those which least naturally belong to youth.

Caroline had a day and a night to ponder over her situation; breakfast was hardly removed the following day, when Mrs. Beaumont and Emily entered; the former took Miss Shirley aside, and told her that, upon the receipt of the letters from Calcutta, stating her brother's affairs, she had written to her man-of-business, desiring him to prepare the necessary

instruments for settling ten thousand pounds on each of her nieces, adding, “ When you are tired of Caroline, she will always find a *home* at Beaumont Abbey.”

This act of kindness was at the same time communicated to both the young ladies ; as Mrs. Beaumont had not mentioned either her kind intentions, or the object of her visit to Emily, when her nieces attempted to express their thanks, she took them alternately in her arms, saying,

“ Don’t thank me, for this is by far the happiest day of my life ! I never knew before the value of wealth as a source of happiness ; I now feel it, as a means of making others happy.”

Their visit was not long ; Caroline had suffered a good deal from revulsion in feeling, and kept all the evening in her own apartment.

The following morning brought her aunt a letter from her friend, Lady Graham, who said,

“ Though upwards of four score, I yet am not insensible to the happiness of those I love ; and though not now possessing the pen of a ready writer, I cannot help scrawling a few words, to say how anxious, how very anxious, I feel that *your* niece should think favourably of *my* nephew ; he has always been to me an *enfant cheri*, for he was sent out to his uncle very young ; and I have no scruple in saying, she may go

half the world over without meeting his fellow. I may be partial, but I am not quite blind yet, as to my mental feelings; and I cannot help thinking, that the woman, who refuses Alfred Graham, will live to repent it."

Certainly Caroline had pondered on the subject, but not to the disadvantage of Mr. Graham: what was he, compared to poor George Worthley? who was beginning to be very much in love with her, that she plainly saw; when she first heard of her diminution of fortune, she mentally said, that is an additional reason for *not* accepting Mr. Graham; he shall never owe my acceptance of him to necessity. No, I had rather work for my bread than marry a man I cannot love, merely for a home: so thinks and feels a young and ingenuous mind—and who does not love those who feel so? But was it really true Caroline had no love for Mr. Graham? had she thought of him, of his tenderness towards her, of his amiable affection for the little Molyneux boys, of his interest in her father's affairs, and had it not inspired—if not love, a very tender regard? was there any one of her waking hours that Mr. Graham was not present to her, was there in the wide world any human being she thought as much, and as often of?

Miss Shirley knew, when her visit to Lady Worthley was first settled, Mr. Melbourne and his children

were to be there, and she imagined her detention at Cheltenham would prevent her meeting her friend there ; but she learnt, on her arrival, that a severe infantine fever, his little girl had suffered under, had kept him in town ; he arrived at last at Wedglock, and the moment he saw Caroline, he said,

“Chains and warder for the Greame.”

Caroline coloured “celestial rosy red,” but she plainly felt how matters stood ; was she, or was she not, more propitious ?

Lady Worthley, however for a moment she might have wished Caroline to have smiled on her unfortunate son, could not, even with a mother’s partiality, look at *her* fine commanding figure, and see her accomplishments, and think the thing *possible*. She therefore, with her usual good sense and kindness, thought the sooner any vague hopes, her son might have formed, were annihilated, the better.

As Lady Worthley was an old friend of Lady Graham’s, and also now acquainted with the circumstances under which Caroline and Mr. Graham stood towards each other, when they were all there together, Miss Shirley showed Lady Graham’s letter to Lady Worthley, who immediately said,

“But, dear Caroline, what is your objection to such a man as Mr. Graham is by every body described to be ?”

Caroline coloured and hesitated, and then said, "Mr. Graham is, I allow, all his friends think, but his destination is India—I have a decided objection to going there."

"But," replied Lady Worthley, "can you think that going for a few years to a residence you dislike a sufficient reason for rejecting such a man? you will not, believe me, find a Mr. Graham on every goose-berry bush!"

Caroline felt unable to answer.

"Do you," continued Lady Worthley, "personally dislike him?"

To that Caroline did not answer, for he was every day advancing in her good opinion.

"Then consider" said, Lady Worthley—

The conversation here was interrupted.

But two days afterwards Miss Shirley received a packet from Mr. Graham, it contained a letter to her, and one which he begged she would give to her niece, the purport of both was the same.

He had, though he modestly expressed it, been so serviceable to the English Board of Control for the affairs of India, that he had been offered the second seat at the board; that nothing would tempt him to give up his prospects in India, but his regard for Miss Caroline Shirley; to call her his own, he would

relinquish fortune and situation ; at the same time he must add, that the situation offered him was in every respect greatly inferior to what he held at Calcutta, nor would remaining in England put it in his power ever to make the same provision for her, that returning to India would do ; a residence of ten years there would enable him to return to England with every means of passing his latter life in ease and affluence."

His letter to Caroline was hardly so explicit, but it was more tender.

Lady Worthley was present when they were received, and informed of the contents ; and she joined Miss Shirley in exhorting Caroline to think seriously of the subject. When they met some hours afterwards, Caroline acknowledged herself ready to accompany Mr. Graham to India, or any where his fortune might take him ; she could not resist such a proof of his affection.

He was accordingly invited to Wedglock Park ; as the nephew of an old friend of Lady Worthley's. He was very unwillingly detained some days in town.

On a day that Mrs. Beaumont dined at Wedglock, Mr. Melbourne said to her,

" I have lately seen your friend, Mrs. Van Tulip."

"Oh, have you?" she replied. "I have heard from her, that she is all happiness."

"I am glad of it," returned Mr. Melbourne, "for I should not have guessed it was so."

• "Why?"

"Because, though all about her looks fine and classic, I have reason to know, from my transactions of business with him, that Mr. Van Tulip is the meanest and most miserly man breathing."

• "Impossible!" exclaimed Mrs. Beaumont.

• "Oh, it is quite possible, I assure you," replied Mr. Melbourne, "for self-gratification, and to make their way in the world, misers are guilty of the greatest extravagance, but they indemnify themselves when occasion offers: and, notwithstanding all her fine hats, and all her grand airs, I should pronounce your friend a slave to petty savings, and privations of the most degrading kind."

"Poor Willy!" said, Mrs. Beaumont "you had better have remained with me! but I have nothing to regret now I have Emily."

Previous to Mr. Graham's arrival, as Caroline and Lady Worthley were sitting at work, the former said,

"Well, I am so astonished Aunt Shirley never married! How I wish, Lady Worthley, she would

marry Mr. Melbourne, she would be such a charming mother to his children!"

"She would; indeed, and I believe he has wished it most sincerely, and used his utmost endeavours to induce her; but she can never marry, I am persuaded she never can."

"But why?"

"Because her affections are buried in the grave of one who would have made her happy had his life been spared."

"May I ask who?" said Caroline.

"Have you never heard of Mr. Carleton, to whom your aunt was attached, and he to her from their earliest years? He had no fortune, but he had considerable abilities, and he exerted them in that most arduous profession—the law, and had almost arrived at the point when even *prudence* might have united them; when, on the circuit, he was seized with a fever which prevailed in the county jail, and in three days, before any intelligence could reach your aunt, he was no more!"

"Oh, my poor dear aunt," exclaimed Caroline, "how could she support such a calamity?"

"With the same Christian feelings," replied Lady Worthley, "that she has done many severe afflictions, though this was the severest of all; she seldom likes

to talk of it, but I wish, if that wish was not one that would not bring pain to her, that you could hear her speak on the subject—her resignation—her confidence that what was ordered by Almighty Wisdom was for the best; and though she might not be able to discern to the full extent what this wisdom was, she says she is convinced it is better for herself she should not have married him, her affection almost amounted to idolatry, she might have neglected her God for her husband. And of her deceased lover, she says, she feels his efforts were so great, and to support her might have continued such, as to ruin (as they had helped already to injure his health,) that they might together have trod a thorny path ; now, in a few short years, they shall meet in realms of happiness.”

Caroline was very much affected by this recital, even to tears ; when these were subsided, she said,

“ I have always thought my aunt Shirley was a very superior person, and one more highly informed than any I have ever met with.”

“ You are quite right, very few women are equal to her, for she had a classical education, she wished to spur her brother on, so she learnt Latin, Greek, and Mathematics, with him.

Caroline threw herself back in her chair, clasped

her hands in an ecstacy of joy. Lady Worthley was quite startled, and asked what she meant?

“Oh,” replied Caroline, “I have always longed, anxiously longed, to know a *bas blue*, and now I find that I have lived with one without suspecting it; but I recollect there is a shelf or two in my aunt’s book-case filled with classical authors in their respective languages; I once asked her about them, and she answered negligently, that she had destined them for her nephew, but he did not live to use them.”

“She is, as you and all her friends know, a proficient in modern languages, and she is also a poetess.”

“Oh heavens!” cried Caroline, “and that I should never have found all this out; never have seen her verses!”

“Nor are you likely to do so,” replied Lady Worthley, “unless I should one day show you some that I have; but I believe she has long since broken off all commerce with the Muses.”

“But do not you think, dear Lady Worthley,” said Caroline, “that my aunt is wrong to be so chary of her talents, is not that ‘wrapping them in a napkin,’ or ‘hiding them under a bushel,’ should they not be placed as ‘a light on a hill?’”

“In this age of pretence and *blueism*, I don’t know that I can blame her modesty, but you mistake in thinking they are uselessly hid, on the con-

trary, it is the *result* of all her reading and acquirements, that has made her what she is—a blessing to all her friends by her counsel and assistance, learning, in her, has not led to *display*, it has made her, ~~not~~ vain and presumptuous, only *intellectual*. I know no one who so exactly answers to the lines of Cowper:

‘ Silent and chaste she steals along,
Far from the world’s gay busy throng,
With gentle, yet prevailing, force,
Intent upon her destined course;
Graceful and useful all she does,
Blessing and blest where’er she goes.’ ”

We are solicited by our publishers not to make our volume too large. We are admonished by our own feeling not to grow *prosy*,—and therefore we shall follow the advice Mr. Burke gave a young author, “to leave out the part of his work he was himself best pleased with.”

In pursuance of this hint, we shall not give the meeting between Caroline and Mr. Graham, even if we think it the very best part of our work; but will

only so far gratify the curiosity of our readers, as to assure them, it was conducted to the satisfaction of Miss Shirley and Lady Worthley; and that, at the end of her mourning for her father, Caroline became, with her own entire heart and affection, Mrs. Graham.

The death of Lady Graham put her nephew in possession of a fortune that might have made their remaining in England not an act of great imprudence; but Caroline was so well persuaded of the good sense of Mr. Graham's wishing to fulfil what he had undertaken in the East, that she most cheerfully accompanied him. At the end of ten years they returned to England, with some little Grahams that required education, to remain permanently.

Soon after the arrangement of Caroline's marriage, Mrs. Beaumont's land-agent informed her that there must, for the advantage of the estate, be some timber cut, and some more planted; as *her* interest was not concerned in either, she invited Mr. Beaumont Hastings, who was to benefit, to come and inspect both. He ingratiated himself much with his aunt, and finally offered his hand to Emily.

Mrs. Beaumont was delighted, she gave up to him a handsome income, and bought a house for them within ten miles of her own; though her fond-

ness for their society left them little time to occupy it, for they lived chiefly at Beaumont Abbey.

Its mistress improved her acquaintance with Lady Worthley, and endeavoured to follow her example. By being a thorough country lady, an agreeable, hospitable neighbour to the rich, and a blessing to the poor.

She occasionally resided in Stanhope-street, but without making any farther attempt to collect *literary lions* and *lionesses*, or expose herself in attempts to get up a London acquaintance. The first she left to Mrs. Van Tulip, and the second to those who love the toil; she had found, by experience, how nearly on the heels of such *vanity*, follows *disappointment*, and *mortification*.

POSTSCRIPT.

ACCORDING to the adage, "giving a dog an ill name is equivalent to hanging him ;" a similar fate impends over Prefaces, though they are often, especially in books of science, of great importance, in explaining the plan and intention of the work. In the teeth of the assertion, that they are, to a reader, what a park paling is to a hunter, something to be leaped over, the master spirit who now rules works of fiction, has added long, very long, prefaces to the last edition of his works. Perhaps, when the reading public have been tempted by *his* pen through some twenty or thirty prefaces, the taste for them may revive ; but we humbler scribblers dare not yet hope for the same favour ; and, therefore, we have tried to tempt our readers by a *Postscript*, which is proverbially said to be the most *important* part of a letter, at least one on such subjects as we are expected to choose.

If any gentle or courteous reader, or any we could propitiate by a more flattering name, should have had

patience to read to the end of our work, we have given them the choice of knowing what gave rise to it. But if they startle at the name of a *sermon*, let them shut the book at this page, for certainly a MS. sermon, from which we have given a few extracts, induced us to put pen to paper; on the belief, that in many cases *example* was more useful than *precept*; at least the experiment is tried, and the decision left to an *indulgent* public.

• Ecclesiastes, Chap. vi. 11.

“*There be many things that increase vanity.*”

It cannot be too frequently inculcated, nor too strongly enforced on the young and inexperienced, that those virtues and good qualities, which are not founded on Christian principles, are like an edifice erected on the sand; they may appear firm when the current of life flows on smooth and even, but when the stream of dissipation runs rapidly round them, when vice or folly undermine, or the tempest of adversity beats against them, they fall to the ground; the heart, whence are the issues of moral life, grows corrupted, and the distinction between right and wrong wears gradually away, till the most lamentable dereliction of duty, and often positive vices, disgrace the character.

But when the precepts of the gospel are the foundation of moral and domestic virtues, they are as a castle

built upon a rock, whose towers and outworks may sometimes be shaken by the tempest, but the building itself stands the ravages, almost of time; so when the fear of God, and the influence of religious principles, "keep the heart," it will remain uncorrupted and spotless amongst the snares of vice, and the allurements of folly.

It is a great error, both in religion, and morals, to consider small faults, and minor virtues, as of little consequence; from the frequency with which they are called into action, they become important; for indulgence in venal errors weakens the mind, and makes it more easily yield to temptation on great occasions; and, on the contrary, the habitual and conscientious practice of the lesser virtues, " braces the sinews of the soul," and keeps it in a state of preparation for the trials in which firmness, resistance, and steady adherence to principle, are requisite to gain the victory over the soul's enemies, "*the world, the flesh, and the devil.*"

Amongst *small* faults *vanity* is generally, but very erroneously, placed. It has been observed by those best acquainted with the human heart, that *few* can be found wholly uninfected with that passion, though the shapes in which it appears are as diversified as the features of the human countenance. To consider it as a failing, very little injurious either to its possessor, or to society, is to estimate it very falsely; and it is equally an error, to imagine it one which *time*, or an intercourse with the *world*, will cure.

Unfortunately, commerce with the world seldom cures defects of the heart ; though it may instruct how to hide such as are offensive or disagreeable.

It is only that BEING “ who knoweth whereof we are made,” and sees the inmost recesses of the soul—the thoughts and imaginations, whence all our actions spring—who has power to root out *vanity*, or any of our evil propensities.

One of the most powerful impulses, by which our *spiritual enemy* works, is our *vanity*. Often, when he cannot prevent us from doing well, he can deprive us of the benefit of a good action by making us vain of it. And numerous are the occasions on which, if we dared to trust ourselves to examine the motives of our actions, we should discover that their most secret spring was that *vanity* which would destroy *our own* good opinion of them, and make us ashamed of what we had before valued ourselves on.

But desultory observations will not bring the truth home to our own hearts ; we must examine in what instances *vanity* is most likely to govern our actions.

“ *There be many things that increase vanity.*”

Perhaps, amongst women, none more than personal beauty, on which they are from infancy taught to set too high a value.

A pleasing exterior is certainly the gift of God, and therefore may be considered as a blessing ; it is intended as a mean of exciting agreeable sensations, and giving a

favourable impression of its possessor ; for the same purposes are given the flowers, with which, with such a bountiful hand, our paths are strewed ; but grateful as they are to the senses, no one was ever so absurd as to place them on an equality with the fruits of the earth, the corn and vegetables, which are the food of man. Life might be sustained without flowers, but not without the fruits of the earth ; and a person may be highly estimable and engaging without personal beauty.

Indeed, it is amongst the wise ordinances of providence, that the fairest mind is often in the least lovely case ; and it not unfrequently happens that the attention bestowed, and the value set, on external graces, leaves the mind uncultivated, and the heart unregulated. Of what value is that beauty which covers a heart full of vanity and conceit, or under which are hid the evil passions of envy, and ill will ? surely none in comparison with a heart replete with kindness, benevolence, and affection.

Indeed it is necessary, in order to make personal beauty to the highest degree engaging, that it should be attended by the virtues of the mind. Modesty, humility, gentleness, will make even an ordinary countenance shine ; and on one cast in the mould of beauty, they add the only permanent bloom. Whilst vanity, envy, affectation, and all the other evil dispositions produced by an ill regulated heart, will appear in the face, as well as the conduct. No art can hide them effectually. If the source is not pure, the stream must, some where or other, discover it ; and a mind de-

formed by evil passions, can only be hid from the most careless and superficial observer. •

But those who have no pretence to *personal vanity*, find other food for it. Nature may have gifted them with talents, these are also intended as blessings, and as the sweeteners of life, some of the flowers which embellish it. But it is only when such talents are given as a means of subsistence, or are exerted in domestic circles to gladden the heart, and amuse the leisure of those it is our duty to gratify and please, that they are valuable.

When talents become objects of *display*, they are degrading to their possessor (unless professionally employed), and foster a vanity destructive of the best interests of their owners, both here and hereafter.

The desire of exciting admiration, not uncommon in those who are endowed with talent, betrays them into courting a distinction, of which, if they had properly weighed the value, they would have shrunk from ; it leads to exhibitions of their skill, destructive of the delicacy, modesty, and retirement of manners, so peculiarly belonging to the female character, and substitutes in its room, a confidence, that must spring from *vanity*. And it is truly remarked of those, who court general admiration, that they have *insatiable vanity* and *cold hearts*.

Nearly allied to *vanity*, indeed the very foundation of it, is a still baser passion ; *selfishness* : where one is contemptible, the other is odious, and is the parent of .

many vices, however softened down into the term *egotism*; it is equally contrary to the holy precept "of doing to others, as we wish them to do to us," or to St. Paul's precept, "in honour preferring one another."

As both passions have the same spring, so both have equally the same termination—*Vexations of Spirit.*

THE END.

